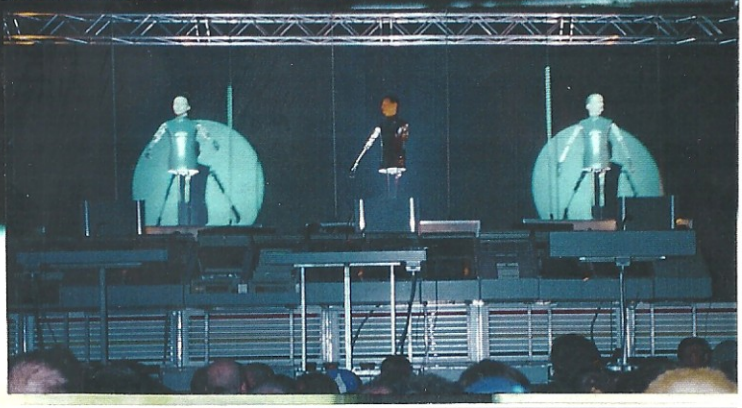

AKTIVITÄT 9

UNOFFICIAL KRAFTWERK FANZINE • AUGUST 1997

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AKTIVITÄT

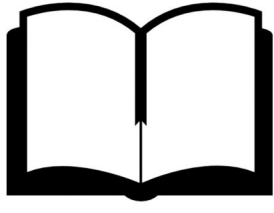
KRAFTWERK FANZINE

This document contains the scanned pages of one of the Kraftwerk Aktivität Fanzines or complimentary publications that were produced from 1992 through to 1998.

During this time 10 Fanzines were published along with various update issues and other complimentary publications.

The scans have only been altered for clarity, with the exception of addresses and phone numbers that have now been blocked out. So please note that all errors and miss-information are as they appeared at the time of publication. Later issues tried to address the earlier problems as the production team put more stringent editorial practices in place.

Best viewed with two pages side-by-side



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AUGUST 1997

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AKTIVITÄT IS AN UNOFFICIAL FANZINE PROVIDING NEWS ON THE OUTPUT OF KRAFTWERK AND RELATED ARTISTS. PRODUCED BY FANS, FOR FANS. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED WITHIN EACH ARTICLE ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR AND NOT NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE EDITOR. THE ARTICLES AND PHOTOS / IMAGES ARE COPYRIGHT TO EACH INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED FOR UNFAIR GAIN WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE COPYRIGHT HOLDER.

ACTIVITY

Following their successful return to live work this year, with their appearance at the Tribal Gathering event held back in May, Kraftwerk have recently announced two new live dates for later this year. They will be playing at the Posthof, Linz, Austria on Thursday 16 October 1997. Two days later they begin the proceedings for the Multimediale 5 at the ZKM (Centre for Art and Media technology), Karlsruhe, Germany on Saturday 18 October at 9:00pm. Tickets can be ordered via the WWW at the following URL; http://www.ticketworld.de/Kraft.htm Should you wish to find directions on how to get there, a similar WWW visit to the following URL will help; http://www.karlsruhe.de/Stadtraum/Tourismus/anr_en.htm

There has been no signs of the double-CD re-issues planned by EMI for the 'Man Machine', 'Radio-Activity' and 'Trans-Europe Express' albums. The 'Man Machine' one in particular is a mystery since it was given a release date (then put back) but still never appeared. It seems that copies must exist since it was reviewed. Quite what has happened is anyones guess -- though we might speculate that Kraftwerk themselves have perhaps axed this particular repackaging exercise. Whether any of these reissues will now see the light of day is unknown.

Tribal Gathering

They came, they saw, they conquered. The centre pages of this issue feature my own review of the Tribal Gathering event. Naturally, this has been the big news of the year on the Kraftwerk front, especially since they performed a brand new track. Speculation suggests that this new track will eventually appear on the forthcoming Wim Wenders soundtrack to his 'The End of Violence' movie. Whatever, a short excerpt of the new song that Kraftwerk performed at Tribal Gathering was shown on an MTV Europe news broadcast in late May. It can be accessed currently via a World Wide Web page (see the World Wide Werk article later in this issue for more details.)

Radio not-so-1-derful!

Radio 1 broadcast a portion of the Kraftwerk performance from Tribal Gathering, though seem to have annoyed the vast majority of Kraftwerk fans in their handling of the affair. For starters, they gave the impression that it was broadcast 'live', but this was far from so... the Kraftwerk portion of the Radio 1 broadcast didn't commence until a few hours later and the selection of tracks broadcast also left something to be desired. Basically, the broadcast only contained the following tracks... 'Numbers', 'Computer World', 'Sellafield 2'/'Radio-Activity', 'Trans-Europe Express'/

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'Abzug'/'Metal On Metal', 'Pocket Calculator'/'Dentaku', 'The Robots'/'Robotronik'. So, no new song and no 'Man Machine' either. To make matters worse the first two tracks were recorded (or played back) at the wrong sample speed, meaning that they sounded too slow. Whether this was a Radio 1 mistake is unknown, it appears likely that Kraftwerk would have stipulated some extra degree of control over the recording of this concert, so perhaps in their haste to turn around the production in time to broadcast, the flaw in the recording speed was not noticed. It is an imponderable, who will know for sure quite why it was broadcast slow in part? Whatever, if you have the necessary technology available you can increase the sample rate from 44 to 48 Hz which will sort out the problem apparently.

The Tribal Gathering cover images

On the front and back covers, as well as the centre spread, you shall find colour pictures from the Tribal Gathering event. While there have been better photos published in the media both here and abroad and available via WWW sites, these photos are all exclusive to Aktivität and unavailable elsewhere. Getting the photos at such events is never easy and this time round it was even more difficult due to the rather boisterous nature of the audience, hands flailing everywhere in a mad dance! So, while they're not the greatest of pictures to have been included in Aktivität I hope that you do enjoy them.

The front cover... the main picture used as a backdrop is from 'Trans-Europe Express' and shows a blurry image of one of the new films used during the song now of an actual TEE locomotive. Of the three smaller pictures, the top one shows (from left to right) Henning Schmitz, Fritz Hilpert and Florian Schneider during 'Autobahn' and gives a view of the new outfits that the band wore. Next photo is from 'The Robots' and highlights the new spotlight lighting used. The bottom photo is from 'Autobahn' once again and shows one of the new graphics used, on this occasion a technical illustration of a Volkswagen Beetle.

On the back cover... Once again the main image used as a background is from 'TEE'. Though the image doesn't show it well, the screen image displays a TEE train logo. The top left hand photo is of Henning Schmitz in silhouette, again from 'TEE'. To the right is a photo of the various official Kraftwerk cycling shirt/t-shirt designs that were available for sale from the merchandise stall. Finally, the middle photo shows Ralf and Henning in silhouette, once again from 'TEE'. The centre spread shows a large photo showing the hi-tech outfits that Kraftwerk wore for the performance of the new song and 'Music Non Stop'. As this photo was taken with flash it doesn't quite show how it looked on the night, where the yellow portions of the suits glowed in the dark. This photo was taken by Alan Bell, many thanks for the use of it for Aktivität, Alan.

The media...

With Tribal Gathering, Kraftwerk were everywhere in the music press, yet there was not even one single new interview with the band to show for it. It would be too numerous to try and list all the publications that featured retrospective articles or subsequent live reviews and pictures from the event, suffice it to say that both here and abroad there has been plenty of material awash.

Aktivitaet

As you'll no doubt appreciate, issue 9 has been long overdue in its appearance. Initial plans were for it to appear in January or February of this year. This got delayed and with the announcement of Tribal Gathering it seemed inevitable that it would wait until after this event before appearing. That it has taken close on two and a half months since that event to appear is even more indicative of the fact that this issue has had a

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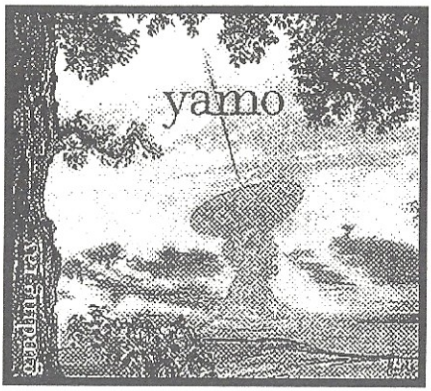

YAMO — 'GUIDING RAY' GERMAN CD SINGLE

YAMO — 'STEREOMATIC' GERMAN CD SINGLE

troubled evolution. Basically, as editor and producer of the fanzine I find that personal commitments have eaten into the spare time that is required to properly oversee the production of the fanzine. I hope that the Update news sheets have helped fill in the gaps, but the bottom line nowadays is that I really don't have the time and impetus for the task of overseeing the fanzine to the extent that it deserves. Therefore, I have to confirm that issue 10, when it appears, will be the final issue of the fanzine. I don't see this as being as drastic a development as it may at first sound; my advice to anyone who is not already on the Internet would be to get yourself a connection -- you'll get far more Kraftwerk information that way, the information becomes available at a far greater speed than the fanzine and its Update sheets can ever hope to match.

The original plan for issue 9 was to include a welter of images from the archives, that it be a primarily visual issue. Kraftwerk's appearance at Tribal Gathering has unsurprisingly changed the nature of this issue, with the result that it has a much greater portion devoted to covering that event. To make up in some way for the lack of images that were originally planned (and which should comprise the greater proportion of issue 10) the centre pages of this issue are in colour too, as well as the cover, a first for the fanzine and I hope that you like the result. This is a one-off for this issue as it has made the total cost of production for this issue a lot greater than normal, and it could not be sustained for another issue.

Bootleg news

As ever, bootleg CDs abound. But wait a minute... It's reaching a point now where Joe Public has sufficient access to the necessary recording CD equipment that private individuals can burn off small runs of CDs with compilations of tracks culled from various sources. The chances of finding these CDs is thus much less than the more familiar

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bootleg CDs of the past few years, turning up at record fairs. Rather than document some of these recent releases here, where there is limited space this issue, it may be time for an update to the 'Kraftwerkers Guide to Bootleg CDs'. As there is much demand for a bootleg CD of the recent 'Tribal Gathering' concert, it is worth reprinting details of the most recent such CD to appear, information courtesy of Klaus Zäpke;

The title is 'Lebendige Menschen' Tracks 1-6 are the BBC 'Tribal Gathering' broadcast. The sound quality is excellent. However, 'Numbers' and 'Computer World' play at the wrong speed, as on the BBC broadcast. Also, there are two inaccuracies in the tracklisting: track 2 is actually 'Computer World', not 'Computerliebe', while 'The Robots' is the full version, and not only 5'16" long, as it is stated on the sleeve. The quality of the three bonus tracks (Ludwigsburg 1991) is okay, but not as good as the Tribal Gathering tracks. Catalogue number LVCDE 7997621, Label; Kling Klang Produkt it also states "Made in United Kingdom".

The booklet includes six of the eight live photos from the German magazine Spex article, plus four excerpts from the large Musikexpress # 7 live photo (with Henning Schmitz named as Fritz Hilpert and vice versa), plus the Ralf Hütter robot from the Musikexpress # 6 title page. It includes also a short review of the Tribal Gathering gig, which is basically a shortened version of the NME review. The front cover is similar to the 'Man Machine' cover, only that the four Kraftwerker's and the stairs were replaced by a promo photo of the 1991 robots.

Seeing (Remake) Red...

Plenty of mail was generated for the Aktivität mailbag earlier this year with the 'Remake Red' and 'Remake Blue' (as they seem to be known as) remix 12" singles. As these have appeared for sale in regular high street stores such as Virgin and HMV the inevitable conclusion has been that they must be official Kraftwerk produkt. However, they ain't. Featuring 'Computer Love', 'Home Computer' and versions of 'TEE', the various permutations of these singles on coloured vinyl on the go are basically cover versions with samples of the Kraftwerk originals thrown in for good measure too. While they are fair approximations in some cases ('Computer Love' and 'Home Computer' have their charms, while 'TEE' is in more radical techno/trance territory, verging on the nosebleed), the fact that these singles appear and can be sold for the regions of £7-£8 purely on the fact that they contain 'something by Kraftwerk' is a little sad. As consumers, shouldn't we all be a bit more select in what we are buying?

The Box Set...

Hype being hype, I suppose it was inevitable that demand for EMI's promo box set of four 12" singles issued to coincide with Tribal Gathering would generate a lot of interest backed up with hard cash for actual copies. With a catalogue number of KLANGBOX101, the set has proved very much in demand. Estimates of how many copies actually exist vary, either 250 or 500 seems likely. Some copies have been given away in prizes for some of the music magazines and, of course, some copies have made it onto the open market too. You can expect to pay upwards of £100 if you want a copy, it seems. Even the singles on their own seem to be selling for crazy prices at the moment. Crazy, because the only 'new' material on any of the discs is a new instrumental edit of 'TEE' – the rest of the tracks are all regular LP mixes. A perplexing release then.

As for what it all consists of... The four 12" singles come in a cardboard box-- black on the outside and inside too. The front has the familiar robot logo (a la the WWW pages and 'The Mix' sleeve) printed in white, with 'Kraftwerk' in the familiar jaggy bit-mapped logo. The 12" sleeves have the Robot logo on both sides, including appropriate titles for each side. The singles are thus;

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EMI KLANGDJ101 – 'Trans-Europe Express' (7.08)/'Trans-Europe Express' (3.30) (Instrumental)
A side from LP mix, B-side a new edit from the LP material.

EMI KLANGDJ102 – 'Numbers' (3.20)/'Numbers' (3.20)
Regular 'Computer World' LP version on both sides.

EMI KLANGDJ103 – 'Musique Non Stop' (6.15)/'Music Non Stop' (6.15)
Regular 12" mix on both sides.

EMI KLANGDJ104 – 'Home Computer'/'It's More Fun To Compute'
Regular 'Computer World' LP versions on both sides.

Some copies of the set also comes complete with a T-shirt; it too is black, with the robot logo, printed in silver this time. only some of the promo sets appear to include this item though.

Autobahn picture disc

Collectors ahoy! A recent item appearing for sale is a picture disc pressing of the Autobahn LP, hailing from Mexico, label; Dis* Colleccion cat. no.; 6360 620. The disc has the 'round the table' colour group photo from TEE inner sleeve plus UK Vertigo style 'Kraftwerk - Autobahn' title. The other side has a recreated UK Vertigo LP design plus title listings and credits. The Dis* Colleccion label is a side company of EMI and they have manufactured other pic discs (like the Pet Shop Boys' 'Very' album), and they always use the original UK catalogue no. for these. Whether this is an official, semi-official or unofficial release is not known. Copies have appeared for sale in regular stores however, and certainly Sister Ray in London have had some.

Yamo news

Since issue 8, Wolfgang Flur's Yamo project has come to life and made their initial releases. You can find a review of the debut LP 'Time Pie' a few pages on from this. At this moment in time it is available as a German release but it will also be issued in the UK, America, Japan and Sweden too, on various record labels. The US issue, on the Hypnotic/Cleopatra label is set for a September 9 release date. It's been reported via the Kraftwerk mailing list that Wolfgang Flür will be in New York at the CMJ Music Convention on Sept. 6th, no doubt to coincide with promotion for the release. There are also two Yamo singles in circulation, 'Stereomatic' and 'Guiding Ray' -- the latter being somewhat scarce.

Karl Bartos news

Demos of new material from Karl Bartos have been in circulation. They are quite far removed from the Elektric Music sound of 'Esperanto' and are much more in the vein of his work with the band Electronic. It's rumoured that this material will see a German release via SPV records in the autumn with a UK release to follow early next year, but I stress that this is but rumour at present. Whether it will still be under the group name of Elektric Music is also unknown. His continuing collaboration with the Swedish band Mobile Homes is also noted.

NEU related news

More re-releases of old material from the Klaus Dinger archive appear via the Captain Trip label, with La Dusseldorf releases the most recent. The WWW pages that deal with Dinger news note recently that Michael Rother has vetoed the re-release of the NEU! albums and that the following projects are currently in preparation; a second la! NEU? album, the publication of live recordings from the 1996 Japan concerts, and a world tour.

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ACTIVITY *REVIEWS*

YAMO - 'TIME PIE' (EMI-Electrola/Odeon/Spin, 7243 8 54172 2 1)

Tracklisting; Time Pie (Minute Pie) (3:49), Mosquito (Hunting Feels Better) (3:44), Stereomatic (Stereomagic) (4:41), Awomanaman (The Kiss) (4:54), Aurora Borealis (Greatest Show For Free) (6:52), Guiding Ray (Space journey to FFFF towns) (7:35), Tra Testa E Mano (Between Head and Hands) (4:48), Speech Dancer (Talk Back) (4:18), Naked Japanese (Wrong or Right) (4:33), Dr UG.LY (More Than Slim) (3:57), UG.LY on the Run (Never Stands Still) (1:53)

Finally released in May of this year, the debut album from Wolfgang Flür's Yamo project showcases the particular style of his vocals and stories which has little if anything in common with Kraftwerk's material. Should this be a surprise? After all, a cursory glance at past Kraftwerk releases reveals no mention of Wolfgang Flür amongst the composition credits. Quite what input to the overall Kraftwerk sound was Wolfgang Flür's responsibility will likely remain an imponderable, what with Kraftwerk's reticence to discuss specifics. Musically however, there are echoes of Kraftwerk and their techniques, far more than I originally expected before hearing the album I must admit. But you should approach this album in the knowledge that it should come with no promise to brook Kraftwerk comparisons.

'Time Pie' then is an eclectic mix of kitsch analogue sounds and the very much in-vogue scrunched-up distorted ambience that Mouse On Mars, amongst others, have uncovered as a viable avenue for exploration. And, in places, a very contemporary dance groove too it must be noted. Mouse On Mars signature is writ large upon proceedings in fact – if you are familiar with their work, in particular their previous 'Iaora Tahiti' album, a touch of *deja vu* will be present with 'Stereomatic', which is in fact an upgraded, be-vocalled version of that albums opening dubbed-up dreamy 'Stereomission'.. which featured a certain Mr Flür as guest percussionist on Mouse On Mars vesrion.

Apart from the music, the lyrics/vocals steal the attention – for sure, Wolfgang Flür displays an extremely recognisable and unmistakable style of his own. Not quite singing, these are more like exaggerated tales from a story teller. Supplanted by additional female vocalists in parts, such as 'Mosquito' and 'Stereomatic', the Kraftwerk past is evidenced in the electronic vocals/vocoders of many of the tracks. 'Speech Dancer' in particular could be Flür's very own take on the techniques of 'Music Non Stop', easy. Similarly, 'Naked Japanese features some form of vocal processing that sounds as weird as hell on first listening but has a charm of its own – like the track itself, on first listen I scratched my head and think, 'what is this?!', as it slides into a heavy backbeat and unashamed analogue workout. 'Time Pie' itself, a minimally sleek techno-flavoured groove with the barest of vocals sneaks in some fast-clocking vocals which hark back to 'Computer World 2', no question about it, with the lightest of melodies filling the background space in. On a track such as 'Tra Testa E Mano' however, I have to wonder how much of the proceedings is Flür and how much the input of Mouse on Mars is responsible, since it sounds so much like something that would have slotted in with ease on 'Iaora Tahiti'

The stand out tracks however are 'Guiding Ray', which has a definite NEU!-like motorik beat propelling it onwards and upwards and 'Dr UG.LY', whose infectious electronicically chirruping backbeat and lo-fi vocoded hook are home to Wolfgang Flür's affected vocal which will either endear itself to your heart instantly, as it did mine, or drive you up the wall!

As with Elektric Music, there are unquestionably Kraftwerk techniques present and correct here but you should approach with an open mind – this work has a style all of its own, its nearest neighbours being the Mouse On Mars/Orb-like ambient-grunge tactics prevalent in recent years. I'd recommend you seek it out and judge for yourself. *IAC* ❑

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VARIOUS ARTISTS - 'TRANCEWERK EXPRESS VOL. 2' (Hypnotic/Cleopatra)

Tracklisting; 'Intro' - Martin O, 'Airwave' - Martin O, 'Ruckzuck' - Robotron, The Man Machine' - Zero Gravity, 'Sex Object' - O T Zehn, 'Tour De France' - Interfaith, 'Numbers' - Pygmy Taxi Group, Unlisted track, 'Pocket Calculator' - Voight Kampff, 'Kometenmelodie' by OT Zehn

Released earlier this year, this second volume of especially recorded Kraftwerk cover versions follows on in a far better fashion from the largely uninspired Volume 1 from 1995. Like the previous volume, proceedings commence with an intro, on this occasion supplied by Martin O. Set against a recreated snippet from 'Computer World' (Part 1), the inevitable electronic voice intones the following manifesto...

"This is a Kraftwerk tribute... Martin O continues the story from Trancewerk Express Volume 1... The artists on this album did their tribute to the pioneers of electronic music, music from synthesizers controlled by computers... In the magnetic field of waveforms, oscillators and filters, Kraftwerk classics has been transformed into images of a Tranceworld... a world of sound and energy... Welcome to Kraftworld"

The opening rendition however is not so much a cover version as more of an 'inspired by' number. 'Airwave' by Martin O is a fairly jaunty mild techno workout whose only resemblance to 'Airwaves; itself that I could discern was a vague similarity in some of the chords that flit in and out occasionally. In terms of the vocals, there are none of the original lyric, but there are some occasional samples of American voices. Not too bad at all, with a similarity in vibe to, for example, the 'Mix' version of 'Pocket Calculator' for instance, though the electronic percussion is a million miles away from Kraftwerk's own unique style.

'Ruckzuck' by Robotron wanders into a harsher, metallic void. Initially reminded me of Orbital in their more manic workouts such as 'P.E.T.R.O.L.'. Contains some very Kraftwerky electronic percussion samples, most impressive. Ruckzuck itself can be identified from the flute riff that pops up here and there, trying to elbow itself in against the metallic synths and disjointed sounds. Not a million miles away from the Technocrats take on 'Ruckzuck' from their 1993 cover version.

'The Man Machine' is, of all the tracks covered here, by far the most faithful to the original. A very nice bass synth adds depth to proceedings, with a fair approximation of the original jerky electronic tune present and correct as well as the unmistakeable 'Man Machine' rhythmical pulse. Unfortunately, I found the vocals a let down; rather than use a straight electronic vocoded/computer generated source, a watery blur seems to smear them a fair bit, somehow not quite convincing.

'Sex Object' by O T Zehn. Well, it's not quite 'Sex Object' - more of a mish mash of 'Trans-Europe Express' and 'Sex Object' set against a fairly pedestrian house backbeat and squeezy little 303 bass squiggles. The main melodies of 'Trans-Europe Express' and 'Sex Object' are picked out in string samples.

Interfaith's take on Tour De France' opens with an extended, rhythmless interlude just like Kraftwerk themselves have been playing it live, before a clanky, metallic backbeat bounces in. Like 'The Man Machine', this is pretty faithful to the familiar Kraftwerk shape, though the main melody is bent a little askew, which makes for a plausible diversion. And, unlike the vast majority of renditions here, the vocals

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from the original are retained, on this occasion intoned in a breathy, French female manner. Sometimes, things don't quite work, the rhythmical breathing samples for example seem a bit weedy here and may have been better left out altogether.

'Numbers' - Pygmy Taxi Group is an intriguing amalgamation of numerous Kraftwerk signatures - set against a mid-tempo house beat, the backdrop has traces of the 'Mix' version of 'The Robots' in snatches, while there are very appealing 'Home Computer'-like interludes rising up constantly in the background with even a rhythmical shade of 'Radioactivity' present towards the back end of the song. Inevitably, there are plenty of the electronic voices intoning the numerous linguistic counts. A new tune altogether is added, which obviously has nothing in common with the original 'Numbers' until the end that is, when it mutates into shades of 'It's More Fun To Compute'.

This is followed by an unlisted track, which is a continuation of the 'Intro' in fact.

'Pocket Calculator' by Voight Kampff commences as a very laid back groove with soft string pads layered in the background, the only real similarity with 'Pocket Calculator' itself is from traces of the songs melody picked out occasionally in a piano sample. The track changes altogether after four minutes or so, into a faster four/four beat workout, with a vague similarity in the sequenced rhythmical backing but once more it is the occasional melody itself where the only real discernible trace of the original can be identified. Once again, instrumental - with only the occasional electronic vocal snatch of 'digital' to be heard.

'Kometenmelodie' by OT Zehn completes the album. Quite a faithful rendition of both halves of the original opus; the quieter opening half is very similar indeed to the original, but shorter, with heavily effected electronic vocal samples flitting in and out of the background. The track really gets going with the more uptempo half - the shuffling rhythm, not a million miles away from the treatment to 'Autobahn' on 'The Mix' - one can imagine that this may not be a million miles away from how Kraftwerk themselves may have approached their re-worked version, had it been one of the selections for 'The Mix'. Set against a nicely sequenced bass-synth rhythm bed, the original melody is picked out in a more slinky fashion, notes slipping here and there, with the ethereal choral samples in the mid-distance adding a further echo to the original rendition.

An album like this is inevitably going to appeal to some and leave others cold. On the one hand, if you're new to Kraftwerk these can be seen as adding a contemporary slant on Kraftwerk material from another era altogether ('Ruckzuck', 'Kometenmelodie', 'Airwaves'), sugaring those tracks that in their original form are perhaps just too far removed from the glossy, digital shapes of 'The Mix'. On the other hand, you can easily view these as being a poor echo of the Kraftwerk classics, with contemporary but highly bland sounds and rhythms replacing what is essentially the vital Kraftwerk ingredient – the basic but instantly identifiable trademark sound and rhythms. To my ears this is a far more satisfying selection than volume 1 was, but I would still urge you to approach with caution; if you're precious about the uniquely Kraftwerk flavours of the originals you may well come away with a bitter taste. However, if you just can't get into the early Kraftwerk material in its original state, a couple of the versions here may just sugar the pill enough to give you the necessary insights for later re-investigation. *IAC* ❑

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Images

This page —

Left; Ralf Hütter and Florian Schneider, pictured in Düsseldorf, 1977.

Below; Ralf Hütter and Fritz Hilpert pictured in Kraftwerk's white Ford Transit tour bus, after the Norwich UEA concert,17 June 1992 (Photo; Dave Clark)

Next page —
Dutch music press advert from 1986 for 'Electric Cafe'

More images, pages 31 and 32

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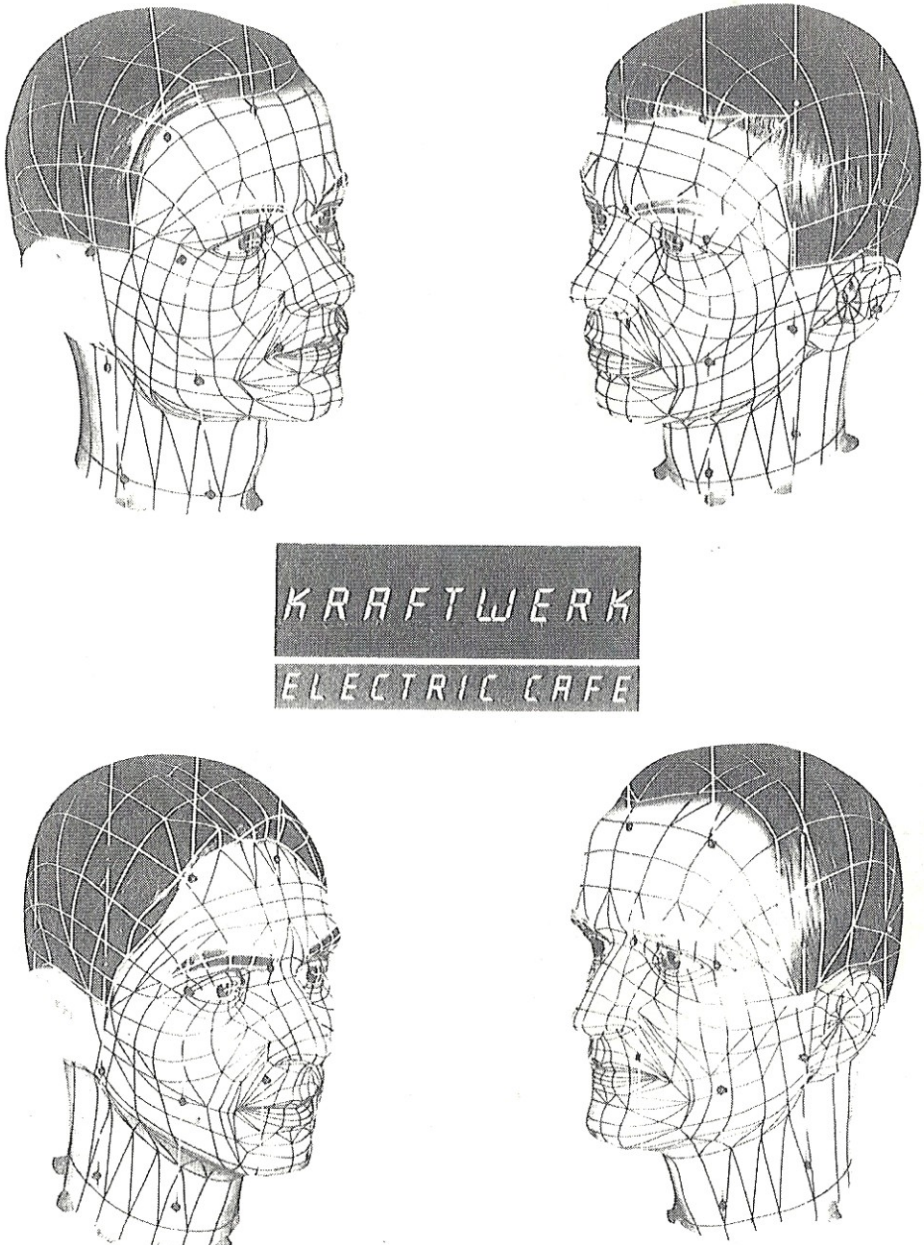

EMI

distributie: EMI Bovema bv.

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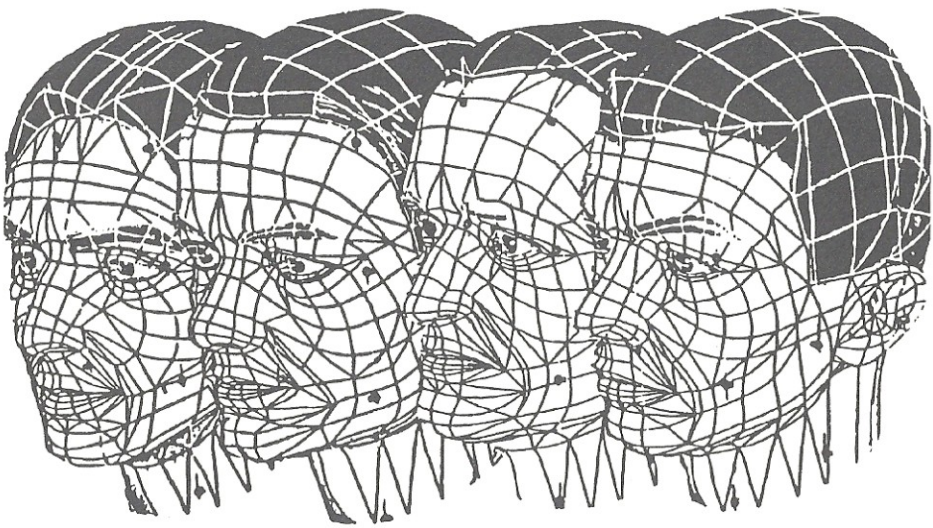
'Electric Techno Cafe Pop...'

11 years on from 'Electric Cafe' and counting...

'Electric Cafe' stands as the last genuinely new album of new material to be released by Kraftwerk to date. 'The Mix', for all its glossily polished and finely-tuned re-recordings, is essentially a compilation of past works rather than a fresh collection of new work. With 11 years now having passed since it's original release and expectation high that its eventual follow-up is due for a release this year, we take a look at the 'Electric Cafe' album and its legacy...



'Es wird immer weitergehen...' *by Gunther Pöcker*

It's interesting that 'Electric Cafe', the album most Kraftwerk fans seem to hate for one reason or the other, does actually feature the most often used Kraftwerk quotation: *'Es wird immer weitergehen, Musik als Träger von Ideen'*. How true...

It has always been my impression that the bad feelings against the album stem from the fact that it 'annihilated' 'Techno Pop', the supposed lost classic. Not that anybody has ever heard the great lost one, to be in a position to judge the band's decision to scrap it and turn it into 'Electric Cafe'. Maybe the real cause is a lack of understanding when the album was new on the shelves. Back in 1986, it was a remarkable piece sound-wise, especially if you could already hear it on CD. The

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sound of the album is actually mind-blowing, especially on the synthetically created string sections, which make for quite a departure from the starker, more bleepy-electronic sound of 'Computer World'. The whole album has astonishing depth and clarity. One cannot imagine the songs being quite the same in the transitional analog-digital sound of 1983 that does fit 'Tour De France' so well.

The 'Cafe' really was 'Electric' by 1986 -- the digital revolution clearly had begun for Kraftwerk, so the album was about media/message releationships. But the sound was taken for granted (sometimes even mentioned as the album's only redeeming quality) and not understood as a statement in itself, and the songs were taken at face value only. (The sound quality really was the 'step ahead' one expects from Kraftwerk - listen to Depeche Mode's 'Black Celebration' in comparison.) The songs themselves comment on this, too, speaking about life in the digital age. Side one is Kraftwerk speaking and singing about Kraftwerk playing with digital media - from text genesis ('Boing Boom Tschak') to composition and vocal treatment and delivery ('Techno Pop' and 'Musique Non Stop'.) Accordingly, the songs have a very open structure and leave lots of room for the sounds and sound quality (and the quality changes during the songs) to be heard and appreciated. Side one gives us three really memorable tracks – and 'Techno Pop' and 'Musique Non Stop' are really perfect examples of Kraftwerk songs, with humour, melody and futuristic ideas, never boring.

Side two opens with 'The Telephone Call', a statement about positive and negative effects of the more and more complex communication environment and global data transfer. It's musique concrete (though others have sung about the telephone before), incorporating telephone sounds from around the world with the help of sampling technology. People being able to really interact with one another even if they are at different places -- this is what makes modern communication. One could argue that the LP version leaves somthing to be desired; true, both the short version and the 12" Mix are better, with the LP version lacking a bit in 'flow'. With 'Sex Object', one is always left with the uneasy feeling of having missed the point. Somehow, one thinks that Ralf is singing about someone he knows, but one can't figure out who he's talking to. Maybe it is meant to recreate the effect of listening to other people's phonecalls by accident. But, as the songs does not even mention the gender of the person the text is about, the listener can't decode the information on the other side, vital information is missing for comprehension. So you are left trying to fill the gaps in the data, but the message is forever crippled. Truly a problem of digital data transfer... Apart from that, the song has fantastic voice treatment, and funny language versions (too bad they left out 'warum warum' in the foreign versions!). The Spanish version is truly ironic -- a flamboyant southern-European language delivered with the soul of an answering machine!

'Electric Cafe' concludes the album. The 'Electric Cafe', it seems, is the meeting-place in Kraftwerk's digital world. The brand-new idea of the 'internet cafe' comes to mind immediately, where old culture and modern communication and technology interface with humans. The spooky bubbling sounds suggest a virtual environment throughout the the song, with again a string melody connecting everything. It seems they were prophets of modern life back then, suggesting places no-one but them could yet imagine. Not one song is irrelevant, it is a concept fulfilled - the modern world, comprised of media, data and connecting structures. It is as much about the medium as the message, both equally important for Kraftwerk. *Musique rhythmique dans l'age atomique.* ❑

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Forum *by B.Cassidy*

Although its hard to believe, it's been over ten years since Kraftwerk released an album of original material. I am of course referring to 'Electric Cafe', possibly, though unacceptably to the fans, Kraftwerk's last ever original album. It is a shame that like most of Kraftwerk's albums, 'Electric Cafe' has seen greater appreciation as the years have gone by. By this I mean that due to being literally starved of new produkt since, it is painfully apparent that an abundance of new fresh ideas were present in the Kraftwerk camp. Commercially though, at the time, 'Electric Cafe' was either seen as too minimal in length to be considered seriously as a full album, or too artistically obtuse and uncohesive, especially for a Kraftwerk product. And in commercial sales terms, it was a spectacular flop. However, it is great in different ways due to its bold new approach to style and content. It is arguably Kraftwerk's most technical album to date, it has far less digital overtones than the highly precise 'The Mix', but it manages to equalise, more so than 'The Mix', a perfect balance of the old and the new (analog and digital). 'The Mix' is a superb album and was probably a good reassessment by Kraftwerk of their career so far, so that they would be in good stead for the future. The contrary could be considered to be true though, as no new commercial output has been seen since...

'Electric Cafe' remains one of my most listened to Kraftwerk albums, I would not say my favourite though, as I'm sure you'll sympathise, picking a single Kraftwerk album as your favourite is nigh on impossible. 'Electric Cafe' is not least intriguing by its diverse nature. With this album the continuity of side A was suddenly snatched from the listener upon the playing of side B. Does this, as the press suggested at the time, present the fact that Kraftwerk were now alien to new whole ideas? This is unlikely as I feel that for each song, and I use that term loosely in relation to 'Electric Cafe', Kraftwerk could have made an entire album. To me this album is like a comprehensive contents page of Kraftwerk's ideas at the time. On side A, the ideas of harsh abrupt/industrial themes highlighting, contradictory, a hidden level of emotion in music alone, using lyrics on occasion to indicate more of the mood and stance. On side B, a veritable diversion of themes ranging from affection, lust, hate, and abstraction. This might sound like intellectual clap trap, but you try and comprehend the meaning of 'Electric Cafe' without excessive descry.

One thing that is highly present in 'Electric Cafe' is double meaning and ambiguity, which was further highlighted in years to come, what with interviews taking place with Kraftwerk's robot equivalents, via monitors, with the images and sound being synthesized/distorted and taking place in a tongue not native to Kraftwerk! To get anymore removed than this is simply not to be there at all! Besides highlighting Kraftwerk's machine heritage and need for minimal subtly changing repetition, 'Boing Boom Tschak'/'Techno Pop'/'Musique Non Stop' are probably so open to interpretation that it is best to just appreciate the continuous aural soundscape for what you see in it, or for what it is. The continuity of these three pieces works superbly though and is testament to Kraftwerk of their ability to mould and progress minimal themes to addictive perfection, even if it did take five years! Technology permitting, I reckon Kraftwerk would have made 'Musique Non Stop' a track that literally never ended. A track that probably boasts that their music is literally life long and never ending in interest value.

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Despite the utilisation of similar techniques and sounds, side B of 'Electric Cafe' presents us with something different to contend with. Starting with 'The Telephone Call' we have a seemingly harmless story of parodic affection. Parodic because it professes a joy of use of the telephone, which Ralf and Florian have demonstrated their displeasure to in interviews, going as far as to say it is outdated because you only hear the voice. The thing that has always concerned me about this track though is its innuendo. Is the caller calling someone or are they calling the various operator messages for affection? Dark humour or worrying obsession? I believe the intention is that they are calling for the operator messages. These messages are almost always pre-recorded on machines, so perhaps it is not so unusual that Kraftwerk would be seeking affection from a machine. With 'Sex Object' a similar theme exists, though the undertones do appear to be more human rather than artificial.

Possibly one of the most obscure pieces of music that Kraftwerk have ever devised is the title track itself, 'Electric Cafe'. Few I have spoken to have ever bothered to contemplate its meaning. In interviews, Ralf has spoken of Kling Klang studio like an ever growing/developing garden, and in the 'Man, Machine and Music' book it is suggested that 'Electric Cafe' is a sort of continuation of this, where Cafes are a sort of abstract place for human development, through conversation, socialising, nutrition even! The lyrics talk of technology which might be a self reference to Kling Klang in some way, who knows. It would be interesting to hear what other readers think. It's highly likely that the track, like the album, is a good indicator of the lack of structure in Kraftwerk at the time.

With 'Electric Cafe', as with most of their other albums, Kraftwerk were inadvertently saying to us all "the possibilities exist". Despite the saturation of the electronic music scene Kraftwerk can still yet demonstrate that they have a roll to play within it. Despite the fact that most Kraftwerk music is years old now, I still consider Kraftwerk to be leaders in their field, as most who have tried to emulate have seldom ventured into true pastures new. ❑

The Rebecca Allen connection...

Rebecca Allen was the woman responsible in part for the memorable computer-generated images of Kraftwerk that formed the primary publicity material for the album. The record sleeves and press photos were all culled from the Rebecca Allan produced 'Musique Non Stop' video. As some background, reprinted here is some extracts with an interview with Rebecca Allan, from 1991, from the 'Mondo 2000' magazine.

'She became part of the Architecture Machine Group at MIT [it later became the Media Lab] and was instrumental in the production of the first interactive videodisc projects... This was followed by a six year stint as Designer, Director and Researcher at the Computer Graphics Laboratory at New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). In 1982 she won and Emmy Award for her computer animated title sequence for the CBS series 'Walter Cronkite's Universe'. Rebecca's fascination with human movement has produced some of the most detailed examples of computer-generated human motion, as exemplified by her work in Twyla Tharpe's dance video production, 'The Catherine Wheel', which also featured

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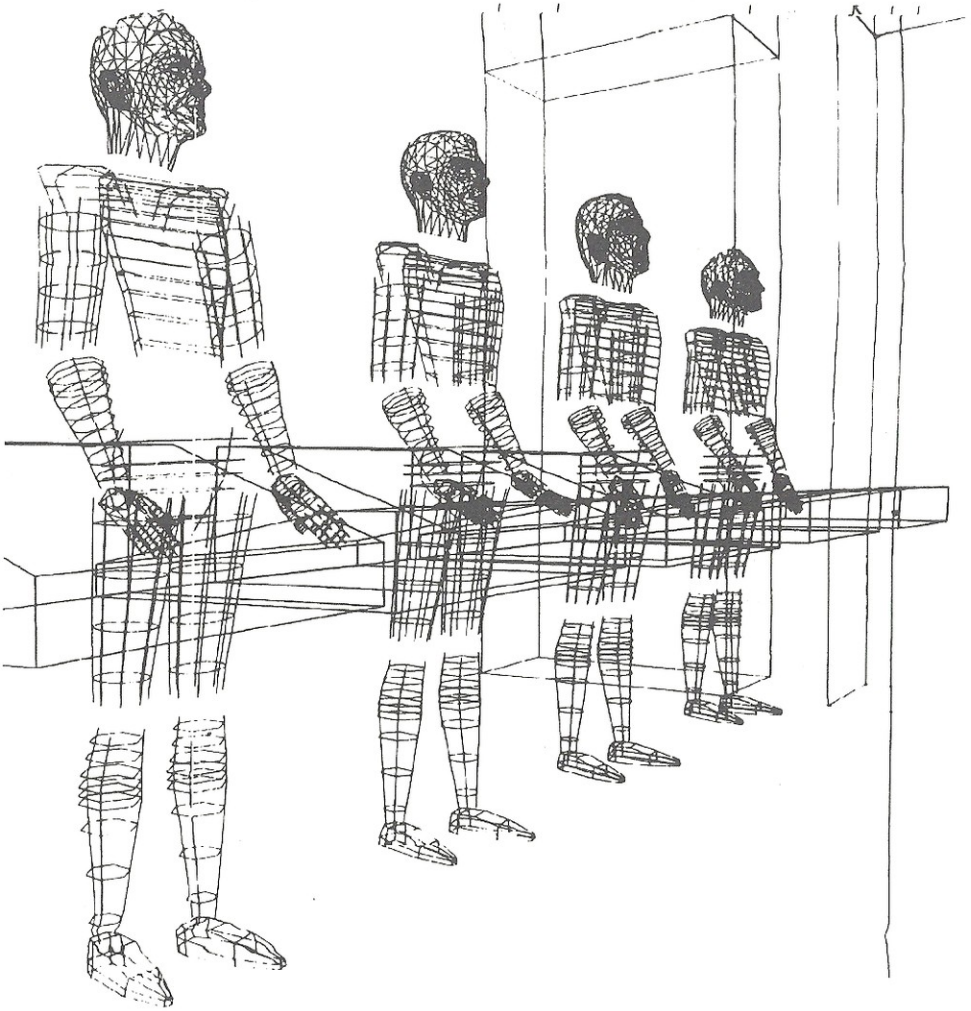
music by David Byrne. She also created an animated work, STEPS, as part of a project with the Joffrey Ballet company.

Other impressive credentials include designing and directing all visual material for the album 'Electric Cafe' by the German techno-pop group, Kraftwerk. This projects' music video, 'Musique non Stop', gathered the 1987 Nicograph Award for 'Artistic and Technical Excellence' and was nominated for 'Best Special Effects' by the National Academy of Video Arts and Sciences. BEHAVE, with music by Peter Gabriel, is the first example of computer animation and live action combined on the new HDTV (High Definition Television) format.'



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On working with Kraftwerk...

"They have this whole peculiar German sense of humour that some people don't get. And since they're not using guitars... when you play a keyboard, this is really all you do [she moves her hands up and down]. It's like typing. So they realised, "Well, we don't even have to be on stage. We hardly move anyway." So they had these mannequin heads made And when they'd sing, "We are the robots" they'd put the heads onstage and leave -- they'd be out in the audience watching or something.

For the 'Musique non Stop' video they sent me their mannequin heads and I went through this horribly elaborate process of putting them into the computer. Then I animated them and brought them to life. I did the video, the album cover and all the press photos. The guys wouldn't let any realistic images of themselves out -- they'd only send out computer versions. The press hated that.

But they [Kraftwerk] were just regular guys. For its time, the video was radical. I mean, they *played* with us. People would see them and get afraid 'cos they thought they were these strict German types, but the whole thing was a put on.

Spending a lot of time with musicians was interesting because there was always the cry from their lovers that *everything* was the band... day and night, which was just like with us computer graphics people. We knew that we were creating images that had never been created before – working out formulas for modelling life that had never been thought of before and it was all-encompassing." ❑

Small Ads

Wanted: Kraftwerk videos of singles and Stop Sellafield (full concert). Also any Photos. Write to Mark,

Wanted: Kraftwerk album 'Electric Cafe - Edicion Española'. Write to: R Hartley,

Wanted: Kraftwerk 'Autobahn' 1991 tour blue t-shirt. Write to; M. Orphan,

Wanted: WANTED: Kraftwerk: 7": Autobahn (USA, 5:46" edit), Homecomputer (Brazilian), Robots/Spacelab/Model/Neonlights(Argentinian), Tour de France (MEX); 12": Trans Metal Express (US 5'42" edit), TEE (UK Promo, KLANGDJ-101); LP: The Mix (Colombian, 1 LP), Man Machine (Canadian white label); orig. promo video tapes: everything. Harmonia: De Luxe (7"). M. Rother: Lichtermeer (7"). A. Bambaataa: Planet Rock (2-trk promo CD). Rheingold: FanFanFanatic (12", engl. vers.). Ibliss: Supernova (LP). Var. Art.: Video: Spirits of Germany, Herzschrittmacher 2; CD: DJ's Best, Cool Groove non stop blast mix I; LP: Super Group Festival I. Klaus Zaepke,

(e-mail:)

Wanted: Kraftwerk press articles (worldwide, photocopies or cuttings), radio interviews, videos, live tapes, photos. Everything is of interest! I'll buy or swap (large selection available for swaps). Klaus Zaepke,
(e-mail:).

Wanted: ULTRAVOX ('76-'96), solos and related memorabilia and rare records wanted! Good prices paid or some regular Kraftwerk vinyl available for trade. All letters answered; Andrew Carruthers,

Student composer, interested in notating all of Kraftwerk's music. Anyone interested in such a project please write to; Simon Pinnington,

For sale: KRAFTWERK 'MAN MACHINE' promotional poster. A4 size colour copies, with signature of Ralf, Florian, Karl and Wolfgang - £5 (including postage and packing). Cheques/Postal orders to; Mark Thomas,

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The time the band forgot...

The mysterious 1976 live concerts -- again!

Cast your mind back to issue 4 of Aktivität and recall the '1976 Revisited' article... some of my thoughts and speculation about the live performances by Kraftwerk dating from 1976, something of a mysterious period; it is not well documented, with there having been a notable paucity of naughty live bootleg tapes of these dates in circulation, save the French radio one, which in itself only has a handful of tracks, not a full document of these elusive concerts...

...until now that is! Some while back, I was fortunate enough to come into possession of a live tape from the London 'Roundhouse' concert from 10 October 1976. While the quality is somewhat basic and there are one or two edits with parts missing, it has provided a fantastic opportunity to hear what the material from this period consisted of; amazing stuff. So, exactly what's so special about it, you may ask? Well, for one, embryonic live renditions of songs such as 'Europe Endless' and 'Airwaves' which Kraftwerk never played again on later tours. Even more surprising is how some of the material echoes the manner in which it was played in the 1981 live shows. For example, the fact that there is a 'Radio-Activity' suite of songs joined together and that 'Die Sonne, Der Monde, Die Sterne' is played - very similar to shows in 1981.

I offer my thoughts on this tape here...

The concert starts with the familiar robotic-voiced 'Meine dammen ünd herren...' welcoming introduction, familiar from the later 1975 shows and all subsequent tours. Ralf then speaks..."You are going to see a film" -- the band tune up their synthesizers -- then Ralf once again... "The first composition is Comet Melody"...

And then follows the song... in a familiar style to the 1975 performances -- however, it is only the faster, uptempo part 2 that is played; in 1975 the band played the more sombre part 1 first. Not on this occasion though. One particular noteworthy feature, the addition of the eerie choral voice Mellotron (?) sounds added on this version, similar to the sounds from some tracks from 'Radio-Activity'.

"We will tune up for the next song, Europe Endless" -- and it follows! And it is the only occasion I have ever heard a live rendition by Kraftwerk of this song -- and it is different! Bear in mind that this concert was some months before the eventual release of the 'Trans-Europe Express' LP and what we find here is a looser, slightly more uptempo arrangement of the track. Ralf actually sings the main 'Europe... endless...' refrain in a much more tuneful manner than on record. The basic shape of the song is intact - the chord progressions, the melody, lyrics. But the 'framework' is altered - the sequencer line is very different and also the bassline - the familiar, strident 'eurodisco' bassline of its recorded form is not there at all. This version is just that little bit looser and the overall effect is a little more free form.

Following on, we have 'Geiger Counter', merging into 'Radio-Activity'; I imagine that this provided opportunity to allow Wolfgang Flür to use the light-triggered electronic percussion 'cage' that has been documented before as having been a notable feature of these particular live dates. Obviously, one can't quite 'see' from a live tape! The actual version of 'Radio-Activity' has definite similarities to the earlier 1981

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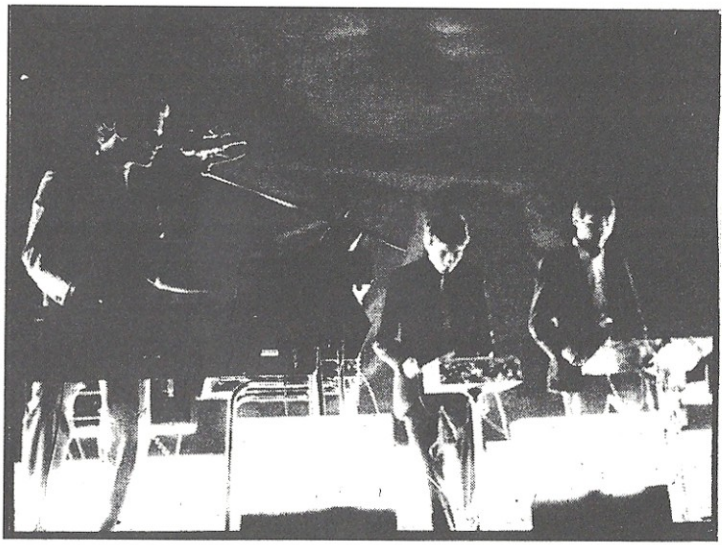

renditions, with a driving bass-synth pulse being the main foundation upon which the familiar lead synth lines and ethereal choral Mellotron voices are hung. Lyrically, it sticks with the recorded lyrics -- 1981's versions saw the introduction of the anti-nuclear sentiments that would eventually be found in 1991's 'The Mix' versions.

Next up... a taped intro familiar from some of the 1975 concerts. It is in fact an extract from Goethe's 'Faust' originally, though from whatever source Kraftwerk have lifted it from they have processed it through a vocoder. For a more detailed description of this particular intro please refer to page 38 of Aktivität 7. This melodramatic intro (it consists of the familiar robot-voiced vocoder speak, church organ and church bells) was first heard preceding 'Kometenmelodie' in 1975 concerts. On this occasion it precedes 'Airwaves' -- another unique live rendition, never again included in the Kraftwerk live repertoire. After a few minutes of sine-wave modulation, the song itself gets going. All very familiar from the LP rendition except that there is a definite lack of electronic percussion to it, it is largely the sequenced bass-synthline that propels the song along, with, once again like 'Radio-Activity' itself, the lead synthlines arcing in their ether-like manner atop.

Following this tracks, Ralf introduces the next section... he speaks so quietly, but I think what he says before this section is that it is a "we will now play the symphony of the radio star". This will take some explaining...

This 'symphony' begins with the taped 'The Voice of Energy' as per the LP version, immediately followed by a very brief snippet from from 'Radio Stars', Ralf intoning the *'Aus des Weltalls Ferne, Funken Radiosterne'* lines from the track. This is then followed by the progressively more sinister robot-voiced vocodered vocals intoning 'Die Sonne, Die Mond, Die Sterne' (the sun, the moon, the stars), with equally unsettling washes of ethereal sound fading in and out of the background. Unfortunately, the tape is edited

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at this point, this particular suite of music finishes with 'Ohm Sweet Ohm'. Its arrangement is much more akin to the LP version in comparison to the 1981 live version. It has a more prominent bass synthline and it speeds up in tempo a la the LP version (the 1981 version was kept to a slow, lullaby tempo throughout). Its sounds also bear more in common, with the Mellotron string samples present and correct.

"The next song is called Trans-Europe Express"... and that it is, albeit a radically altered rendition. The vocodered 'TEE' refrain is very different, more of a sinister electronic whisper a la 'Uranium' in actual fact. But it is the main melody line which differs greatly; radically, in fact! Whereas the recorded version of the track has a melody line of D/G/C/F A#/D#/D, this version has a different emphasis altogether, with C/F/A, D/G/C -- in short, a note missing altogether and a different emphasis to the timing of the later notes. Surprisingly, the more familiar 'TEE' melody line actually comes into the second half of this version. Quite why the first half is so different is a mystery, all I can say is that I'm glad his arrangement wasn't retained as it does not work anywhere near as well as the recorded form. The familiar 'train track' rhythm is present and correct, though it seems to heavily anchored by the bass drum sound, a definite lack of snare drum percussion to get the tempo really going, though it could be an effect of the muddy/bassy overall sound of the recording, I concede. All in all, it's something of a prototype version of the track that is far more majestic in its more familiar recorded form. As a curio however, it is quite something.

Next we have an echo from the 1975 gig, with 'Tongebirge'; like those performances, it is quite freeform and laid back with only partial similarities to the original version a la 'Ralf and Florian'. Immediately as its final notes fade out, the familiar door slam and ignition from 'Autobahn' are heard and we're off...

For starters, it is more keyboard-based; while 1975 versions still retained flute in parts, this version does not. There is also more evident employment of the ethereal Mellotron choral sounds too, which is a notable difference, while it is also at a pacier tempo in comparison to the sometimes leaden 1975 versions. Lyrically we find similarities with the 1981 version, with the addition of the 'listing' of tour dates in the lyrics; *"From Düsseldorf to Bruxelles auf der Autobahn... from Bruxelles to Sheffield auf der Autobahn... ... ...from Sheffield to London auf der Autobahn... Immer wieder, immer wieder auf der Autobahn..."*

Sadly, the recording is incomplete; it runs out towards the end of 'Autobahn'. This means that 'Showroom Dummies', which we know was played as an encore from one of the 1976 live reviews of this concert, is missing. All in all, something of a curio. With a mixture of tracks never performed live again by Kraftwerk ('Europe Endless', 'Airwaves') and fairly unique from later renditions of others ('Trans-Europe Express', 'Ohm Sweet Ohm') all in all an era of its own merit. Now, if only a decent quality copy were to somehow be beamed out from Kling Klang... ah, I'm dreaming again. *IAC* ❑

Tracklisting:

COMET MELODY 2, EUROPE ENDLESS, GEIGER COUNTER -- RADIOACTIVITY, AIRWAVES, 'SYMPHONY OF THE RADIO STAR' (The Voice of Energy -- Radio Stars (brief excerpt) -- Die Sonne, Die Monde, Die Sterne -- Ohm Sweet Ohm), TRANS-EUROPE EXPRESS, TONGEBIRGE, AUTOBAHN.

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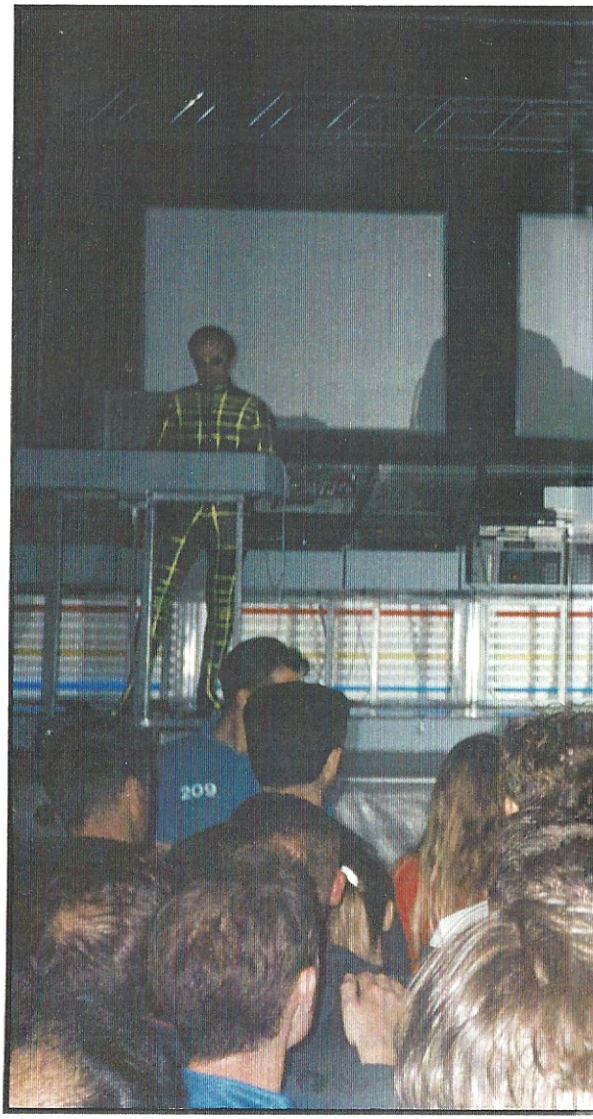
No sleep till

And so 'Tribal Gathering' came to pass... and not a moment too soon! In the months that separated the announcement of Kraftwerk's appearance at the event and their eventual performance, there had been an unparalleled level of media interest in precisely just what those reclusive *musik arbeiter* from Düsseldorf were to be doing in a tent in a field in Luton on the night of May 24 1997. Not to mention the fans themselves -- to put it mildly, the Aktivität postbag has swelled to massive proportions in the past few months, while the telephone has also been hot to the touch most days. Make no mistake, the anticipation of this event easily outstrips anything since the pre-'Mix' days. More so than ever before, the media speculation on Kraftwerk's involvement helped to hype the event to a greater extent than would otherwise have been warranted. Numerous articles recounting the bands history and pondering whether or not they would unveil new material at TG were spawned in the months leading to the show, while the NME, immediately prior to the event, announced that the band would premier three new songs. All of which added fuel to the fire...

For the more cynical-minded however, the clues were portentous enough... There were no new releases from EMI planned to coincide with the event; neither were there any new interviews with the band in the press -- not even one! Surely if Kraftwerk were preparing to unveil new material we could expect them to want to talk about it? So, it was with a sense of impending disappointment that I approached Luton Hoo estate on that sunny May afternoon...



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Luton!

Kraftwerk's appearance at Tribal Gathering 1997 — by IAC

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First surprise of the afternoon was at the gate to the event; I wasn't searched! I had expected a full-scale emptying of pockets and frisking of trouser-leg job, but fortunately this was deemed unnecessary. Next surprise was at the free and easy access to the 'Trans-Europe' tent, which in a number of hours would be the venue of Kraftwerk's performance. Kraftwerk being the meticulously reclusive types they are, I'd anticipated that there would be no access to this tent until far nearer the time of the bands performance. But no, one could come and go in the tent as one pleased. A fair number of obvious Kraftwerk fans were already annexing the stage-front positions in anticipation, scrutinised by the small number of security-conscious men in the front of the stage on sentry duty. With a certain inevitability I noted that the trademark Kraftwerk black drapes preserved the Kling Klang stage set from prying eyes and, no doubt, the hired hands would ensure that none shall pass, should you wish to feast upon the mysteries housed within the racks of Kling Klang 1997 style.

Back outside I found my way to the merchandise stall. The Kraftwerk goods consisted of three designs of cycling shirt and one standard T-shirt. The most attractive items were the blue 'Autobahn' and yellow 'Radioactivity' cycling shirts, which I recognised from the 1993 Kraftwerk concerts in Europe. The new cycling shirt was somewhat more anonymous -- grey with the 'www.kraftwerk.com' legend and a mouse pointer logo in lime green -- hmm, hardly the most exciting of garments. Matched perhaps by the black T-shirt with white 'dancing robot' logo which made up the quartet of chest-enhancing goodies up for grabs here. We can but speculate that Kraftwerk's days have not been filled with endless toil towards sophisticated merchandise designs...

Leaving the merchandise stand numerous tenners lighter of pocket, I made my way to some of the other tents to sample the aural delights on offer, eventually running into some acquaintances from previous Kraftwerk gigs and conventions. With the same inevitability of night following day, the question on everyones lips was whether or not Kraftwerk would play anything new...

The general consensus was that the Kraftwerk tent was going to become mighty busy before the men themselves made their way to the stage, so erring upon the side of caution we decided to make our way to the 'Trans-Europe' tent for about 8 o'clock, two hours in anticipation of Kraftwerk's advertised entrance time. A wise move in retrospect, since the tent began to fill long before kick-off, initially to the relentless beat of the Two Lone Swordsmen's sound system. This came to an end 9ish, followed by silence... not even the customary Kraftwerk 'bleep blops' (heard at all of their shows in the 90s) were aired tonight. The sides of the tent itself were opened up so that revellers unable to find footing within the tent could share in the electronic music sounds of Kling Klang. While there were no warm-up 'bleep blops' the customary Kraftwerk traditions were retained for the intro however, come 10.15...

'Meine dammen ünd Herren... Ladies and Gentlemen... Heute Abend... Aus Deutschland... Die Mensch Maschine... Kraftwerk'

Kraftwerk were shortly upon us.

The unmistakable count of 'Numbers' had commenced, it's time-keeping rhythm arriving on cue with the inevitable drape-unfurling, to reveal Kling Klang 1997 style... Which was not remarkably different from past years. The easiest difference to spot was that the equipment was placed 'face-on' to the crowd, as opposed to the v-shaped setting more normally used. In fact, this was the same as had happened in the bands 1992 UK-shows, so nothing radically new there. As for the actual equipment within the racks of Kling Klang, well... not quite the wholesale revamp that I had been expecting. For sure, there are some new items nestled in there, with a stream of red lights blinking sweetly in

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parallel sequences behind Ralf Hütter a clue to the nature of the Doepfer MAQ sequencer, I presume and the Doepfer 'Schaltwerk' also visible between Fritz and Florian's positions. All in all, it's safe to say that, cosmetically, Kling Klang mk. 1997 is barely altered from before, the four video screens behind each member also making their return. And any self-respecting Kraftwerk fan could work out from the parallel metallic tubes behind those self-same video screens, that the robots were also back in town, biding their time for their own robot dance...

Big difference however was the fact that there were two giant video screens on either side of the stage, these mirrored the screens behind Kraftwerk in their choice of visuals and must surely have been a welcome relief for those unfortunates miles from the stage front.

If the event were indeed filmed then it must have been low-key, there were no steadi-cam cameramen running about here there and everywhere at the peripheries of the stage. The event was recorded however, since portions of it were broadcast on Radio 1 later in the night. More on that later...

And whom might Kraftwerk 1997 consist of, I hear you ask? Is it true that Wolfgang Flür has rejoined?! No... same line up as 1993; from left to right, Ralf Hütter, Henning Schmitz, Fritz Hilpert, Florian Schneider, clad in hi-tech black jackets this year though, instead of the shirts/roll-neck tops of previous tours. Florian has quite noticeably elected to shave his hair these days and be done with it all.

One could detect from the opening 'Numbers' what to expect next; not surprisingly, 'Computer World', followed by 'Home Computer'. The former has had a few nips and tucks and its melody line is more in tune with the original recorded version I note, as was the case in 1993s shows.

Similarly, if you're only familiar with the 1991 UK tour version of 'Home Computer' then tonights version would have sounded different, since its rhythm has been beefed-up considerably, but really it's once again as per the 1993 model by and large. And this turned out to be pretty true for most of the performance -- where Kraftwerk played tracks are per their last outing in 1993, the versions differed in only minor ways. The visuals however are another matter, though for now all you need to know is that these first three tracks ('Number', Computer World' and 'Home Computer' were pretty much as before.

Had this been a straight repeat of 1993s shows then next in line should have been 'Computer Love', but this song was not played at all tonight. Instead, the mighty 'Man Machine' was brought to life, its UK debut in fact, since only the 1993 shows have previously been witness to its tones. A big cheer greeted this one. The simplistic red, black and white geometry of its accompanying graphics were entrancing enough, the actual version is somewhat more elongated than the LP version -- it has a heavy duty rhythm for sure these days, but longer, trance-like instrumental intervals. The graphics spell out the minimal lyric in great huge constructivist-inspired block lettering, no messing about there. Big cheer upon its finish, a favourite with the crowd.

Back to the schedule... 'Tour De France', it's extended, dreamy intro still present and correct, along with its black and white archive footage on the video backdrops. Always a highlight, absolutely no doubt about it being a crowd favourite, not much else I can add -- business as usual, most definitely.

Ünd wir fahr'n auf der Autobahn next... I enjoyed this one greatly, a bit of tinkering has been done here and I really loved the 'electronic yodelling' interlude towards the rear end of this song, a definite adjustment in the vocoded voice there. Some changes in instrumentation too and as for the visuals -- well! Someone at Kling Klang HQ has spent some time in daddies loft looking at the old VW Beetle sales brochures, or the like!! Some very sweetly

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nostalgic classic-era car artwork of the historically significant Beetle has been scanned in for use with the video displays, all idyllic, rolling green valleys and the like, while the more familiar black and white 1930s footage is still in there too. There were a few little mistakes to the performance though, it must be noted! And a nice little touch was the very end... the familiar blue and white Autobahn/ motorway road sign but with a red diagonal stripe added through it -- end of Autobahn!!

'Autobahn', while benefiting from some streamlining and new spec for the visuals was pretty much intact from previously. What followed next was a genuine surprise -- the sinister vocoded tones of 'Sellafield 2', the short track that was produced back in 1993 as part of Greenpeace's 'REACT!' ant-Sellafield campaign. Whether it be Florian or Ralf responsible, someone did a mighty good job of coaxing the most unsettling of vocoded tones for this one, while the bald facts of the text were spelled out for all to see on the videos. This segued nicely with 'Radioactivity' of course, which is definitely a highpoint of the set in terms of energy levels and unsurprisingly this got the audience dancing. Like 'Computer World' and 'The Man Machine', the lyric is spelled out big and bold, absolutely no danger of any misinterpretation these days... STOP RADIOACTIVITY! -- message received, loud and clear.

The first portion of the show came to a close with 'Trans-Europe Express'/'Abzug'/'Metal On Metal'... and some new archive film/graphics too... If you're familiar with the TEE train logo that is to be found on the original inner sleeve artwork for the self same LP, then this would be a treat -- colour footage of the same style of locomotive as that. In another setting, this would no doubt be seen as being but a rather pedestrian film of a train, just for rail enthusiasts (me mention trainspotter?! never!). Linked with the music, somehow the whole package knits together nicely. Again, it is the classic Kraftwerk ploy of combining their futuristic music with sweetly nostalgic imagery. I enjoyed these new films and images greatly, but musically the track was little different from its last outing. And the technical hitches which forever, in their own little ways smear the polished surface that would otherwise be Kraftwerk live reappear once again as Ralf sings but no words are heard... obviously someone forgot to turn the volume control up for the first few lines!!

And with its last squeals of wheels on rails, 'TEE' comes to and end and the black drapes close, for what seems an interminable age... punctuated by some strange musical sounds for a few seconds... could it be something new?!

No, instead the drapes are unfurled to reveal the band members with their mini-instruments, time for the 'Pocket Calculator' antics once again. And Florian does not disappoint, hamming it up with the customary 'rock'n'roll' poses and similarly exaggerated gestures. Which, it must be noted, reveal as plain as day that there seems to be little connection between pressing those special little keys and what we actually hear musically...

Ralf, as sober as ever, also decided to include the Japanese lyric too in this particular rendition, so we could all have joined in with 'Dentaku' if we'd known the words off by heart... what do you mean you don't?!! (Only kidding...)

And then the farce begins... As ever, as the song comes to a close, the black drapes close... only, on this occasion, they don't!! A rather panic-stricken looking Ralf improvises somewhat desperately with his mini-keyboard to fill in while ever more furtive attempts to secure the concealment of Kling Klang... Cue a member of the Kraftwerk road staff to take the heroic step of scaling the Kling Klang gantry and moving out, high up over the stage to free whatever obstruction caused the drapes to jam.

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They still work! -- and open to the sound of 'The Robots', the elongated bleepy intro the giveaway as ever... the familiar promo video/animated robot dance is displayed on all the video screens, though it has been altered, certainly its colour into more 'Man Machine' like red and black hues. And unsurprisingly, 'Robotronik' follows... the video screens descend to reveal the robotic manifestations behind and the robot ballet proper begins, with new lighting effects added. And naturally, the crowd love this, for those who have no experience of Kraftwerk live then this is not exactly your typical stage show is it?!

The drapes do their best to close again, but are halted in their task once more... Cue even less patient moves to secure their meeting... and more heroics up above the stage from Herr Kraftwerkroadie

And we all make a lot of noise of course... we want more after all. Some have drifted off of course, even after 'TEE', obviously unfamiliar with the teasing nature of Kraftwerk's live approach of hiding behind the drapes at regular intervals towards the rear end of the set. Even my familiarity with the Kraftwerk ritual could not prepare me for what was coming next however. The drapes opened to reveal the four members of the band clad in a rather futuristic black suit with yellow lines, illuminated with fluorescent light; incredible. Just like the 'Music Non Stop' wire-frame animated figures come to life. The finishing touch being the black glasses with yellow frames... almost Japanese cartoon sci-fi really! Even more astonishing, the fact that the music and sounds from their fingertips and Kling Klang was NEW!!! I repeat, new. A new song!

A NEW SONG!!! A NEW BLOODY SONG!!!

And what does this new song, the first new song that Kraftwerk have played live since Neolithic times sound like? Well... to be honest, fairly pedestrian! If I could think of a way to sum it up it would be a pretty fair approximation of the techniques of 'The Mix', a la the 'Pocket Calculator'/ 'Home Computer' style -- a thumping four-from-the-floor beat anchoring the unashamed bass-heavy techno groove. Truth to tell, it struck me as being the kind of piece that Kraftwerk or, even worse, any self-respecting modern outfit would bash out in five minutes flat at a rehearsal, just to loosen up the fingers and sequencers if nothing else. Primarily instrumental, the vocoded tones merely mouthing unintelligible sounds, it is rumoured that this is the track which will appear of the upcoming Wim Wenders 'The End of Violence' movie soundtrack. Who can say for sure, all I know is that it was an incredible sight to see Kraftwerk clad in such a manner and performing this new song. No videos accompanied this performance on the backdrop.

And the vibe continued into 'Music Non Stop' -- the new outfits quite obviously inspired by the very same video which was shown on the backdrops for this song -- really quite something to see it all come together. 'Music Non Stop' itself varies on each and every occasion, on no two nights is it ever quite the same. Tonight it was reasonably short, certainly in comparison to some of the monster-length renditions from 1991. Ralf was quite visibly playing parts of the track live, this being one of the few occasions these days when you can see for yourself what is really live and what is already pre-programmed. Kraftwerk tradition being what it is, Florian makes a swift exit stage left, to the customary loud cheer. This is echoed on each occasion for both Fritz Hilpert and Henning Schmitz's departures. Leaving Ralf, who obliges with his customary solo display; perhaps more than any other song, 'Music Non Stop' is his own tour de force.

Before long, Ralf too leaves the stage... the words repeating the Kraftwerk mantra into the night, sullied only by the recalcitrant drapes...

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And the show is over.

What did I make of it? Immediately afterwards I couldn't help but dwell on how much of it was similar to the shows from 1991-1993. Once again, Kraftwerk have returned from their exile with their customary silence promising nothing, but the intervening years suggesting new works to be unveiled. Even though they did in fact reveal a brand new song, somehow the hollow feeling remained; it was hardly a new 'Tour De France', 'Home Computer' or 'Numbers' -- a nod and a wink to current dancefloor practices perhaps, but not an item I would recall as unmistakably Kraftwerk if I were to hear it in an anonymous situation like a club dancefloor. The visuals too flattered to deceive -- the sci-fi suits were cute, but again hardly cutting edge- remember 'Tron' anyone? Even further back, the movie 'Breaking Glass' and the song 'Eighth Day' by Hazel O'Connor? I was delighted and charmed by the sweet nostalgia of the new portions on view from 'Autobahn' and 'Trans-Europe Express', but they were merely nice new epaulettes and buttons on last years dress. Where be the new Spring and Summer collection?! Kraftwerk have merely been polishing and refining the existing designs. And they sparkle with ever greater lustre in the cases of 'Autobahn' and 'TEE'. Perhaps 'restoration-in-progress' rather than 'work-in-progress' best sums up the Kraftwerk live experience. 'The Mix' is alive and well.. perhaps next year we will indeed find a new release from Kraftwerk, 'The Mix 98'.

On the other hand, they came, they saw, they conquered. The press speculated beforehand that these rather aged gents would be shown up against the shiny people of current club culture, that Kraftwerk were something of a fossil in these times of frenetic drum'n'bass breakbeats and similarly glossy, sexy, slim-limbed shapes of the 90s. Well, they held their own -- with an almost painful stoicism, the four Kraftwerkers manned their posts with nary a smile nor laugh between them, like some cool automatons descended from some unearthly place, surveying the earthlings gathered before them with a a curious air of detachment. I'm sure more than enough people went away with their curiosity aroused following Kraftwerk's performance.

Unlike 1991, 1992 and 1993, this was the only concert given by Kraftwerk thus far -- there was no low-key warm-up date at a small venue beforehand. It appears that the band played a full dress rehearsal set behind closed doors on the Thursday night instead, witnessed by only a handful of people.

Kraftwerk continue in their own inscrutable manner. Are they the ageing mistress who now insists on dimming the lights before revealing themselves to their lover, only giving the merest glimpse of their unadorned selves lest the shape of the past, long since gone, now be dispelled? The security measures, as noted in numerous media articles reviewing 'Tribal Gathering' were there to ensure that no-one got to get too close to Kraftwerk and no-one could ripple the mystique that has accrued over the years. Kraftwerk gave no interviews perhaps more than ever before because there is little left to say that would do nothing but rent the carefully stitched illusion. By the same token we might note that the new song is an instrumental...

However, despite the doubting nature of some of the pre-TG articles in the music press, once again it was a hearty thumbs-up in the subsequent press reviews. Vene, vidi, vici. Again, it seems as if Kraftwerk have gotten away with doing just enough to retain the mystique while not revealing the true nature of what they have been occupying their time with in yonder Düsseldorf's Kling Klang studio. So, a new album perhaps? As mistresses go, we must all leave with a peck on the cheek, a glimpse of stocking and a vague promise of 'maybe next time'...

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own gear. gigs. success waiting for those ~~with right attitude~~.

EX-KRAFTWERK MEMBER seeks musicians, to form influential band, originality a must.

BASS PLAYER seeks C&W band, has own gear, transport

THE STORY OF NEU! - LA DUSSELDORF CLUSTER - HARMONIA *BY STEWART ORD*

PART TWO

SUGARTIME... Continuing the involvement between Michael Rother and Cluster through producing the latter bands next album ('Zuckerzeit'), the trio next decided to work on a second Harmonia album. This set, 'Deluxe', appeared in Germany on the Brain label in 1976, featuring Rother on guitars, keyboards and vocals, Roedelius on keyboards and vocals, Moebius on synth, nagoya harp, vocals and Mani Neumeier of Guru Guru on drums. Rother's recognisable, minimalistic melodic lines were still present and correct, with Roedelius and Moebius synth work there too as well, but Neumeier's drumming gave it a different edge which was not present on the first album. The sleeve, an atmospheric photo of the sun, was also a different theme altogether from the mock-consumer packaged product of the first LP, which would have not looked out of place on a Be-Bop Deluxe record. With little evident commercial success, Harmonia released no further albums. Neumeier went back to drum for Guru Guru, Cluster continued as a duo going from strength to strength, often collaborating with Brian Eno or Conny Plank before becoming accomplished solo artists in their own right. Rother meanwhile headed off on a solo trajectory...

The earlier Rother solo albums continue with the clean-lined motorik rhythm familiar from NEU! and the customary, beautifully minimalist Rother guitar lines, the music tending to twist and turn in pleasantly unexpected ways then returning to begin again, like looped cycles. Most of his early albums feature Jaki Leibezeit of Can at the drum stool but it is Rother's music all the way. Later albums see less guitar and more synthesizers swamping the sound, particularly 1983's 'Lust', which overdoses heavily on the technology, all but relegating the trademark Rother guitar sound to oblivion. It's not too difficult to see the obvious influence of this theme upon the 'NEU! 4' album.

FROM NEU! TO DÜSSELDORF...

With the demise of NEU! after their 1975 LP, the Dinger brothers and Lampe continued to associate. So from September to December '75 and in between their own studio and Conny Plank's, the La Düsseldorf sound was created. The first album release, the eponymous 'La Düsseldorf' saw a German release in 1976 on the Nova label. However, a UK release was delayed until its 1978 issue on the Radar label (RAD 7), somewhat late to make the impact it may have deserved. Echoed in the later works of others, back in '76 La Düsseldorf were fashioning their own version of 'neu' music. Klaus Dinger vacated his drum stool in favour of guitar and vocals, Thomas provided percussion, vocals and light (?) and Hans weighed in with more percussion

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LA DUSSELDORF

and electronics. Guest musicians appeared in the form of Nikolaus Van Rhein on keyboards and Harald Konietzko who provided the bass for 'Silver Cloud' and 'Time', the two tracks that took up side 2.

'Silver Cloud', released as a single in Germany, provided the band with some measure of success. It was the only instrumental on the LP, though the lyrics for the remaining tracks were minimal to say the least. The album's cover consisted of a night time photo of Düsseldorf airport provided by another member of the Dinger family, Heinz in this case. A resourceful brood, no?!

AND ONWARDS...

Riding on their success, La Düsseldorf and their guest musicians returned to their studio to record the next venture. Andreas Schell also contributed, playing piano on the album that was to be released as 'Viva' in late '78 on the Nova label in Germany and the Radar label in the UK, still had the same style as before but the musical context was a different departure altogether. Pseudo-Bavarian kindergarten melodies filled the album making it seem almost childish. The cover was white with the word Viva spray painted in blue over the front. A lo-tech, DIY feel that runs through all of Dinger's works, it seems.

The Bavarian childlike themes stemmed over into La Düsseldorf's third and final LP. Released in '81 on the UK independent Albion label (ALB 107), more famous as the home of Hazel O'Connor amongst others, 'Individuellos' contained the same musicians and guest musicians utilising the same instruments as they did on 'Viva'. The double drums of Thomas and Hans and huge sweeping synth chords fill the background to the simple guitar and piano lines as they had done on the previous LP, but the melodies make it much more happier and joyful. They even covered an old NEU! track and gave it the La Düsseldorf happy mix ('Liebe Hoenig '81') and it is the only record that I know of that has kazoo's on it ('Dampfreimen') except

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for Fluffy Pup by the Macc Lads!!! The cover is a photo taken from a TV programme , I am led to believe that it is of La Düsseldorf on a programme for German TV but I cannot confirm this.

AND ONTO DINGERLAND...

So why did La Düsseldorf split up if 'Individuellos' was so much fun to make ? I am afraid I can not answer that, needless to say they went their own separate ways, even the Dinger brothers stopped working together. Thomas Dinger released a solo LP ('Für Mich') before teaming up with Niels Christianson and Kenji 'Damo' Suzuki, the enigmatic vocalist once of Can, to form 1a Düsseldorf though I have not heard of any material having been released.

Klaus's next adventure was the group Neondian who released a self titled album in 1983. Then followed Die Engel Des Herrn along with Gerhard Michel and Klaus Immig, which saw one album released , 'Die Engel Des Herrn'. However, around about 93/94 the profile of NEU! and with it Klaus Dinger was heightened greatly by the proliferation of NEU! material suddenly appearing on bootleg CD releases...

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO BACK INTO THE WATER...

At the beginning of '96 a curious release started to drift over from Japan. On the Captain Trip Records (CTCD0-20, NEU! 1.000-4) 'NEU!4' is a bit of an oddity containing tracks from collaborations between Dinger and Rother originally recorded 10 years previously, (a time when techno was starting to take over the world, of which NEU! is cited as one of the main influences along with Kraftwerk). Utilising state of the art equipment of the time (Fairlight, MXR, "and other stuff" as in the words of Dinger), the duo started recording in October '85 and finished in April '86, but without the magic of Conny Plank to help them the results rarely sound like the NEU! of old, the closest being 'Crazy' but even that still sounds as though it could have been on the first La Düsseldorf LP.

The disc starts off with a slowed down version of the German national anthem with more reverb than you could shake a stick at, under the name of 'Nazionale', while the last track, 'elanoizaN', is the same track but played backwards. They certainly have not lost their humour with old age! Most tracks have a huge input from Dinger though. Little traits that were evident in small doses on the La Düsseldorf LPs are greatly enhanced in these recordings, with 'La Bomba' being pure La Düsseldorf, but overall they sound like the same track in various disguises and the LP has a feeling that it is just a collection of out-takes rather than a purposefully recorded disc.

The cover is a hark back to the old NEU! with the sleeve in black and the scrawl in yellow, but inside is a wonderful write up by Dinger as "The Editor" with the background to these recordings. He also goes on at great lengths about the current bootleg CDs that are available with a warning not to buy them and a promise that official versions will be released soon, hopefully this will also include NEU! 4, which was deleted soon after release in Japan and now tends to command a price upwards of £30.

Since the release of 'NEU! 4', there has also been the live 'NEU! LIVE 1972' CD, a rather scrappy, low-fi rehearsal tape. Sound quality is poor; worse than many a bootleg even! Are there further tapes from the archives of Klaus Dinger that are likely to see the light of day via the Captain Trip route? Rumours suggest so, but no signs just yet.

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CONSIDER, if you will, the story of **Steve Hillage**. Once a member of Seventies anarcho-spliff outfit Gong, he famously attempted to see off punk with 10-minute guitar solos and songs about flying teapots. Steve has reinvented himself of late as a techno/ambient wizard at the very forefront of the underground snooze culture as half, alongside long-time partner Miquette, of System 7 (above).

To jazz up the group's latest single, Steve decided to return to the Seventies to exhume the work of another eccentric combo, the German duo Neu! He requested permission to use a sample of one of their songs — a generous and even-handed gesture on the face of it. Sadly Steve found that Neu! were in dispute with each other and their old record company. Soon, original Neu! member Klaus Dinger was in dispute with Steve as well.

First he informed Steve that he hated all samples. As a sample of this aversion, he raved on about how furious he had been to see Julian Cope wearing an old Neu! T-shirt on Top of the Pops. He felt this to be an infringement of copyright. Then Klaus relented somewhat, merely suggesting an impossible set of conditions and an improbable amount of money for use of the sample.

Amazingly, Hillage persisted at his thankless task and got the permission he desired. You can hear the results on the new single Interstate. I can only wonder if it was all worth it.

from the London Evening Standard, 12 January 1996

YOU SAMPLE THAT AND I'LL SEE YOU IN COURT!!

It could be persuasively argued perhaps that the musician of today has lost the ability to write his own songs and create his own sounds with the advent of the sampler, that he or she now relies heavily on his/her sampler and record collection to produce the music we hear today. If the records in this collection have a unique sound or musical phrase, then they will be sampled, looped and layered on top of other samples to create their 'own' work, the more unique the sound the bigger chance there is of it being sampled.

Like Kraftwerk, NEU! and La Düsseldorf samples have appeared on a lot of ambient, trance, techno records over the last ten years. NEU! seem to be a particularly hot ticket and name to drop, with the consequence that mint copies of their LPs change hands for high sums of money and are unlikely to be found in too many bargain bins. Hütter and Schneider are reported as being annoyed about such sampling but slightly flattered at the same time. Klaus Dinger, on the other hand, is less ambivalent about the matter and appears seriously concerned about it: it is his music, his sounds and if you want to use it then you are going to have to pay vast amounts of money for it. Just ask Steve Hillage of System 7; it was rumoured that Dinger wanted one million pounds for the use of a three second NEU! sample (see press clipping).

E-MUSIK For the curious buyer it is best to search out either 'NEU! 75' or the first La Düsseldorf LP but like all the other LPs they are extremely hard to get hold of in their original vinyl form, at a reasonable sum in any case. 'Black Forest Gateau', a NEU! compilation album released in 1981 on the Cherry Red label (B RED 37) contains all of 'NEU! 75' except 'Hero' but also includes 'Hallogallo' and 'Negativland' from the first LP is perhaps as good an introduction as any. The three original NEU! albums and both from Harmonia are currently available unofficially on CD on the Germanofon label (much to Dinger's annoyance), perhaps the same enterprising outfit may release the La Düsseldorf albums in the near future?

It is extremely hard to say what Kraftwerk would have been like today if Schneider stayed with Dinger and Rother, perhaps an extremely avant-garde version of NEU!. There certainly would not have been the likes of 'Autobahn' or 'Trans-Europe Express' or the huge influence that Kraftwerk had on the musicians of the 70s, 80s and 90s. Neither would NEU! have had such an influence over the punk and new wave artists of the 70s and early '80s and neither of them would have had such a great effect on the ambient, trance, techno musicians of today.

The world would certainly have been a different place.

Additional text/edits by IAC ❑

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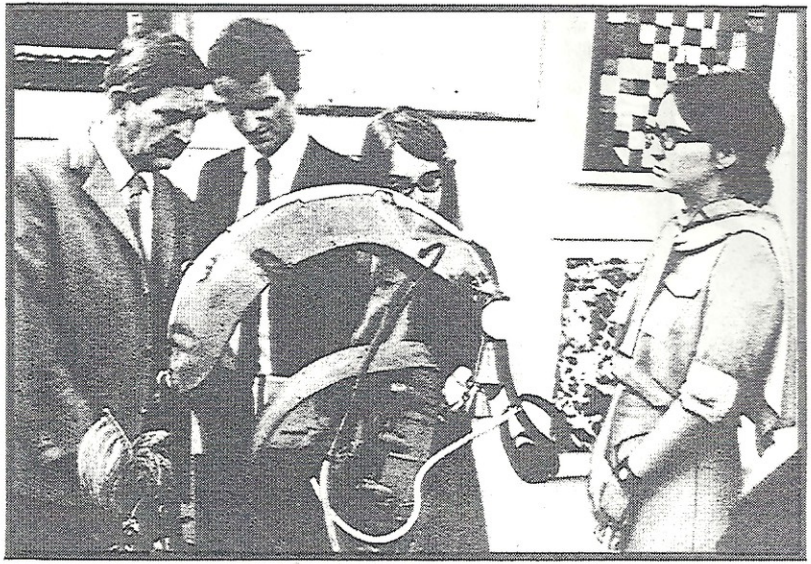
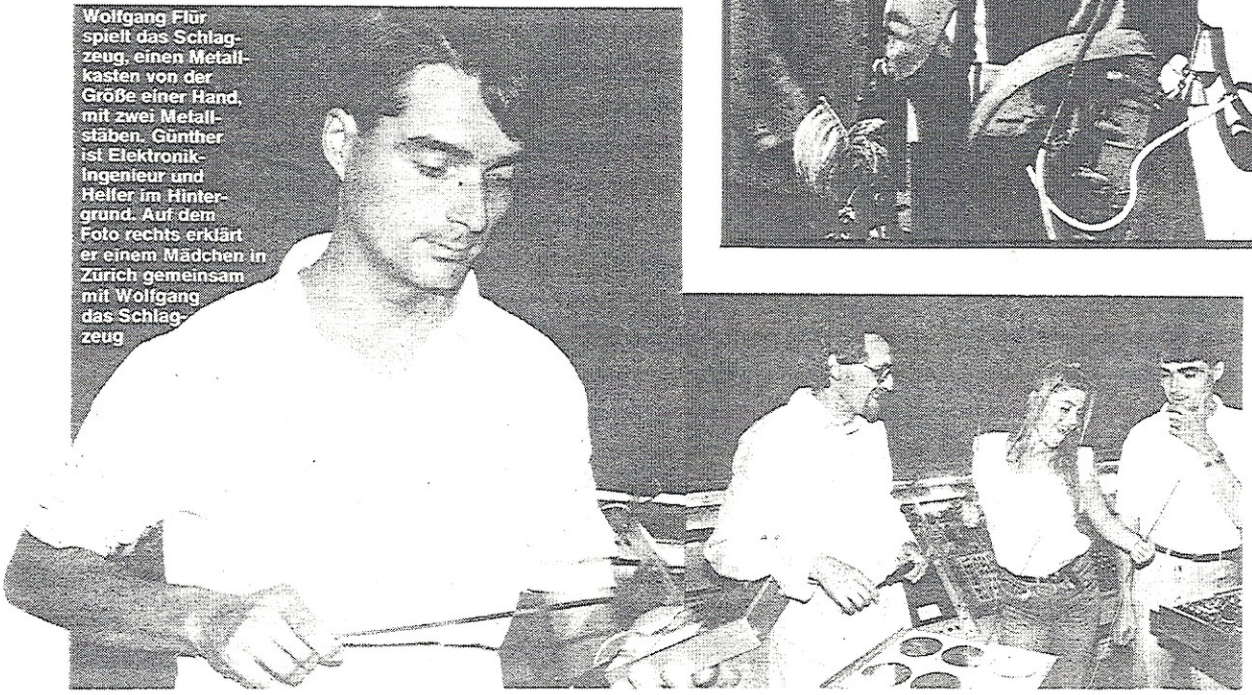
Below; Wolfgang Flür, 1981. The accompanying text is approximately thus... 'Wolfgang Flür plays the (electronic) drums, a hand-sized metal case with two metal rods. Gunther is the electronic engineer and assistant in the background. On the right-hand photo he explains jointly with Wolfgang the drums to a girl in Zürich.
⇩





⇧
Originally from the German magazine, 'Zuhause', 1970, a photo of a younger Florian Schneider-Esleben (second from left) pictured along with his father and sisters, Tina and Claudia.

(With thanks to Klaus Zäpke for pic.)

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⇨

The early years;
Florian Schneider pictured
during the recording period for
the 'Autobahn' album, 1974.

The early years; Ralf Hütter
pictured live in concert,
France, 1973.

⇦

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Questions/Answers 2

The second in a regular series, aiming to nail down the facts on all those Kraftwerk myths...

The band work daily in their Kling-Klang studio, eight hours a day, from 8.00am till 4.00pm.
It is impossible to say exactly how often the band do indeed frequent their studio, but from what is known it seems that the hours tend more to be late afternoon until the early hours of the following morning and it seems unlikely that the schedule is maintained with a daily, workmanlike efficiency, bearing in mind that the band members also enjoy lengthy cycling trips in neighbouring countries.

Kraftwerk have composed the Soundtrack for Fassbinder's film ''Berlin Alexanderplatz''.
Kraftwerk's music was indeed used in this film, but it was taken from earlier LP's and was not especially composed.

The bands 'Radio-Activity' album is available in both English and German language editions.
No, though this was written in the book 'Man, Machine and Music'. The 'Radio-Activity'/'Radioaktivität' album actually features a mixture of both German and English on most of the tracks with vocals, so there is only the one edition.

They played live concerts also in 1983 and 1987 (as credited in some encyclopaedias)

Kraftwerk did indeed plan to tour in both 1983 and 1987 but no concerts actually took place.

In 1983 the tour was intended to promote the 'Technopop' LP that the band planned to release then. A few dates in England were even announced and published by the music press, but these concerts were cancelled.

In late 86/early 87, in interviews with the media in various countries, Ralf Hütter mentioned that the band would play live in 1987, to promote the 'Electric Cafe' album. Again, no concerts actually went ahead.

They toured the USA, Canada and Japan in late 1991 or early 1992

American and Canadian tours were announced for the latter months of 1991 and tickets went on sale. The concerts were however later cancelled, leaving many Kraftwerk fans who had bought such tickets disappointed. No clear reason was ever given for the cancellation and the dates have never been rescheduled.

Similarly, any planned dates for Japan did not take place.

'The Mix' was also to include two other tracks, 'Neon Lights' and 'The Man Machine'.
Ralf Hütter mentioned at a press conference in Sweden that these tracks were also recorded for inclusion on 'The Mix' but not included. The band's 1993 and (to date only) 1997 live concerts included the updated version of 'The Man Machine', but as yet it remains unreleased officially on record, along with other 'updated' live renditions such as 'Numbers', 'Computer World', 'Tour De France' and 'The Model'

Ralf Hütter plays keyboards on a track called 'Drac's Back' by a band called Red Lipstique.
No. This was mistakenly printed in an early issue of Aktivität fanzine, but it appears to be false. However, Ralf Hütter was pictured alongside two of the band members of Red Lipstique in a UK music paper's gossip-column pages in early 1982. perhaps the original confusion stemmed from this.

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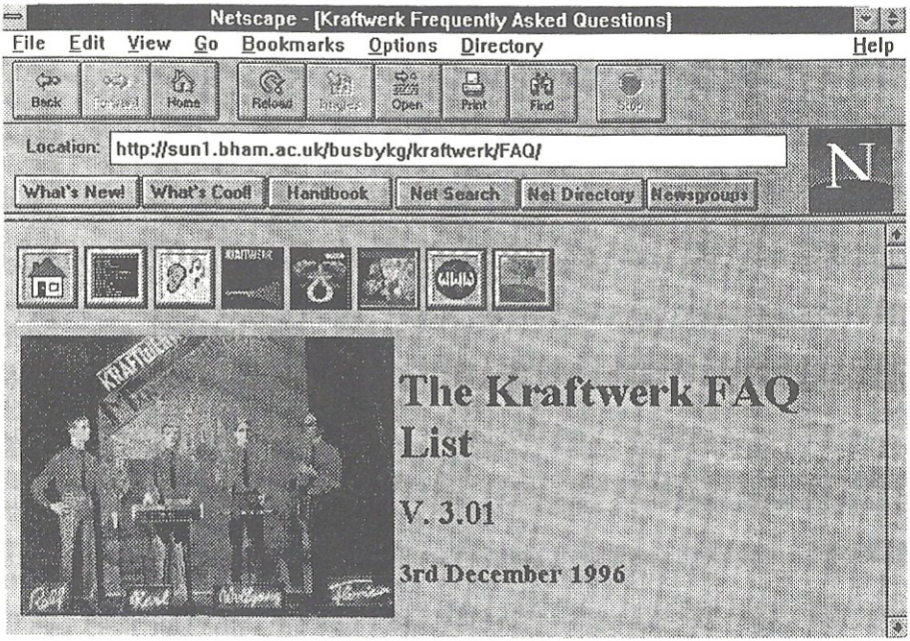
Fahr'n auf der Infobahn...

the beginners guide to Kraftwerk internet sites by IAC

Unless you've been hidden away in splendid isolation these past few years, you cannot but have failed to notice the increasing media profile given to all things Internet... If you're already online and surfing then this article is likely of little use to you, you'll no doubt know all about these sites and be a-globe-hopping from one to the other already. If not... read on... it may well make you wonder whether it's time to get that PC, get plugged in and hit the information infobahn... In all cases the URL at which the WWW pages can be accessed is printed in italics.
Also worth noting, many of these sites make use of the most up to date features and plug-ins, so you'll need an up to date browser or be prepared to download the necessary software plug-ins.



Kraftwerk* — *http://www.kraftwerk.com

There is in fact an official Kraftwerk presence on the WWW now; in December 1996 a homepage for Kraftwerk was launched. Previously, a German company had used the same URL (www.kraftwerk.com) for some time. Kraftwerk successfully pursued the matter legally and obtained the rights to use the domain name for themselves. This they have since done... but don't get too excited just yet. To date, the Kraftwerk site has consisted of extremely minimal content. To begin with all that existed was one page with a Kraftwerk logo, a simplistic bitmapped rendition of the familiar 'radio antenna' logo, in animated form

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beaming out airwaves (if your WWW browser supports this feature), and a 5 second long snippet of sound! No news information, biographical/historical information, band photos and the rest of what you might take for granted... it has very much become the norm for Websites to be stuffed full of shiny, hi-tech graphics and information, all bells and whistles included. Not in Kraftwerk's case however. Since the original inception, there has been a few more pages added – for the Tribal Gathering appearance a further page with an animated dancing robot GIF file and snippet of 'The Robots' was online, with a link to the official Tribal Gathering Website. That event over and done with, the site currently sports a jaggy scan of the Tour De France sleeve design, a sample of aforementioned ditty and a link to the official Tour De France site!

Kraftwerk Webring -- *http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=kraftwerk;list*

The Webring is a network of Kraftwerk sites, ever expanding. If you're new to the web and want to jump into the Kraftwerk sites, this is an ideal starting point.

The Kraftwerk Infobahr -- *http://www.cs.umu.se/~dvlawm/kraftwerk.html*

First online in 1994, the Infobahr is arguably the largest site dedicated to all matters Kraftwerk. From GIF images to sound files to texts of past music press articles to MIDI files, the Infobahr has enough material to sate your curiosity for some while. The occasional criticism is how infrequently it is updated... in truth it is constantly added to, with the sites front page given a new look last December. Certainly, if you have the opportunity and resources available to download sound files of rare and hard to find Kraftwerk material (i.e. 'Kohoutek' single, live 'The Man Machine' etc.) then you will find such items here.

The Kraftwerk FAQ -- *http://sun1.bham.ac.uk/busbykg/kraftwerk/FAQ/*

A Frequently Asked Questions list on Kraftwerk, maintained and updated by Kevin Busby. Essential if you're looking for those obscure or not so obscure facts on all things Kraftwerk or if you're new to Kraftwerk in general. Is updated periodically. Well recommended. Keep up the good work Kevin!

Kraftwerk mailing list and Mailing List Archives — *http://www.swcp.com/lazlo/Lists/info/kraftwerk.info*
http://www.xmission.com:80/pub/lists/kraftwerk/ — *http://archive.uwp.edu/pub/music/artists/k/kraftwerk/pictures/*

Information on the unofficial Kraftwerk Mailing List and the FTP site for its archives and how to access them. The KW mailing list is a forum where KW fans can discuss all manners of KW fact and fiction. You don't need a fancy WWW browser, all you need is an email account. You can receive the mailing list in two forms; as an 'interactive' version, where you receive each individual message one by one as they are sent, or as a 'digest' version which tends to gather a few days worth of such mail altogether in one file.

There are extensive archives too, available by FTP, where you can download previous digests from the past few years (the mailing list has been active since 1993). There are also other files (such as Kraftwerk images and the like) available. Wherever possible, past articles from Aktivität have been mailed to the mailing list, often in updated form with more info than was originally available at the time of the original articles publication, and to correct errors and omissions obviously. These can be found in the digest versions.

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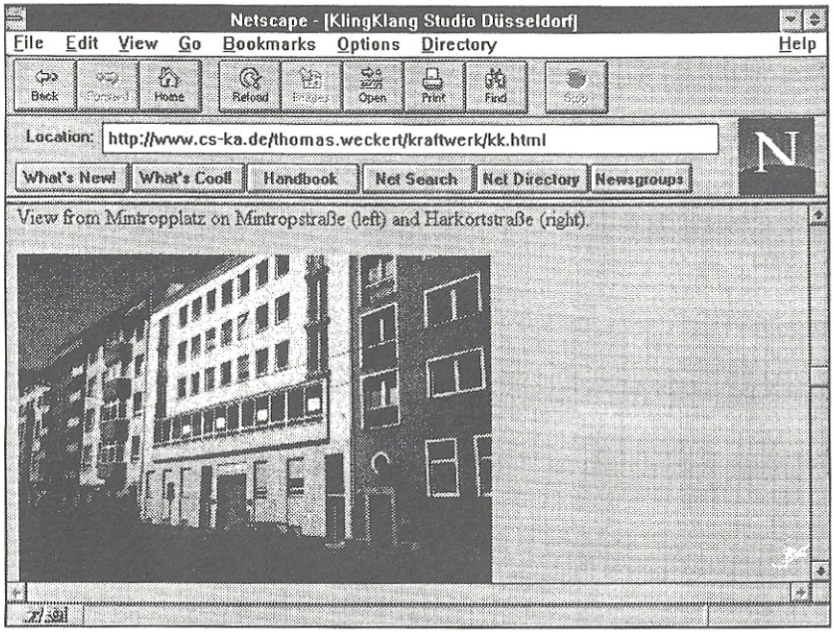

Kraftwerk Picture Gallery — *http://home.pages.de/~kraftwerk*

Some highly visual pages maintained by Thomas Weckert, featuring a great selection of unique Kraftwerk images. The Picture Gallery features text in both English and German and many unique Kraftwerk images from videos, German TV appearance, the film 'Metropolis' and archive sources. There is a link to a page which features photographs of Kraftwerk's Kling Klang studio in the heart of Düsseldorf, as well as Elektric Music's old offices in the same city, this page reproduced above (http://www.cs-ka.de/thomas.weckert/kraftwerk/kk.html) At http://www.student.uni-koeln.de/~tweckert/album.html you will find more -- some live pics from 1992 and a scan of an autographed Music Non Stop single cover amongst other scans.

'Kraftwerk Online Library' — *http://home.t-online.de/home/Zaepke/kraftwer.htm*

Online since January, an excellent source of reference it is too. Basically, a list of the site keeper's (Klaus Zäpke) Kraftwerk collection of bibliographic material. But what a collection! Amongst the listing of press articles and the like from throughout the world, there are links which allow you to access those which already exist online. If you are looking for in-depth Kraftwerk source material, the best starting place.

Rick's Kraftwerk Pages — *http://www.sara.nl/Rick.Jansen/Kraftwerk/kraftwerk-e.html*

Lyrics of Kraftwerk songs from their albums, including those in English, German, French, Spanish and even Japanese! Unofficial, naturally. The lyrics, including wherever possible the myriad foreign language snippets, have been the hard work of fans.

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Kraftwerk Intersp@ce — *http://www.mygale.org/00/timlcf/kw.html*
also check out *http://www.utbm.fr/les.personnes/lu.chen/tim/kw.html*

An excellent series of pages with some news, Kraftwerk MOD files, links to download the software you will need to play them, even Kraftwerk-like fonts for you to download! There is currently an excellent, illustrated review of 'Tribal Gathering'. Maintained by Timour Jgenti.

Aktivität Online -- *http://www.arrakis.es/~jgc/aktivitat/aktivitat.htm*

At long last, pages from Aktivität itself are now online in a WWW format, courtesy of Aktivität's Spanish distributor, José García Corral and his new homepages. This went online in July of this year and currently hosts a small selection of past articles from the fanzine, some in updated form from the original printed versions and with new modest Aktivität style graphics to match.

Kraftwerk Discography -- *http://www.swcp.com/lazlo-bin/discog.pl/discog=kraftwerk*

A Kraftwerk Discography maintained by Lazlo Nibble. 'Lazlo's Discography Machine' also has discographical info on many other acts likely to be of interest to Kraftwerk fans as well as numerous links to other Kraftwerk sites thrown in for good measure.

'Kraftwerk and Organisation: The Early Years, 1968-1973' -- *http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/8880/*

Another series of pages lovingly prepared by a Kraftwerk fan, this time concentrating on the earlier period of the bands history, derived in part from the pages of Pascal Bussy's 'Man, Machine and Music' book.

Laurent Reymond's homepages -- *http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/9199/homekraftwerk.htm*

These pages feature pictures taken at this years tribal Gathering event and are stunning. In particular there are some excellent ones of the new outfits Kraftwerk wore for their performance of their new song and 'Music Non Stop'. Definitely check this out for some really cool live pics.

Matts Kadmark Homepages -- *http://www.student.gu.se/~maka0067*

Modest little homepages site with a selection of Kraftwerk images and audio; audio files are a mainly live recordings. Images range from a picture of Florian Schneider's flat c.1979 to some good piccies reproduced from the 'The Guardian' article from February of this year. There's even a full colour picture of a 'TEE' train!

'Kraftwerk: Introduction of Unofficial Bootleg Disks' -- *http://super.win.or.jp/~blanks/house.html*

A site containing info and images of sleeve designs from numerous live bootleg LPs/CDs as well as remix CDs and cover version compilations.

Kraftwerk Data Pages -- *http://wilma.cs.brown.edu/people/gal/kraftwerk/kraftwerk.html*

A modest series of pages dealing with subjects such as the Kraftwerk aesthetic, the members backgrounds etc. Again, a fans work.

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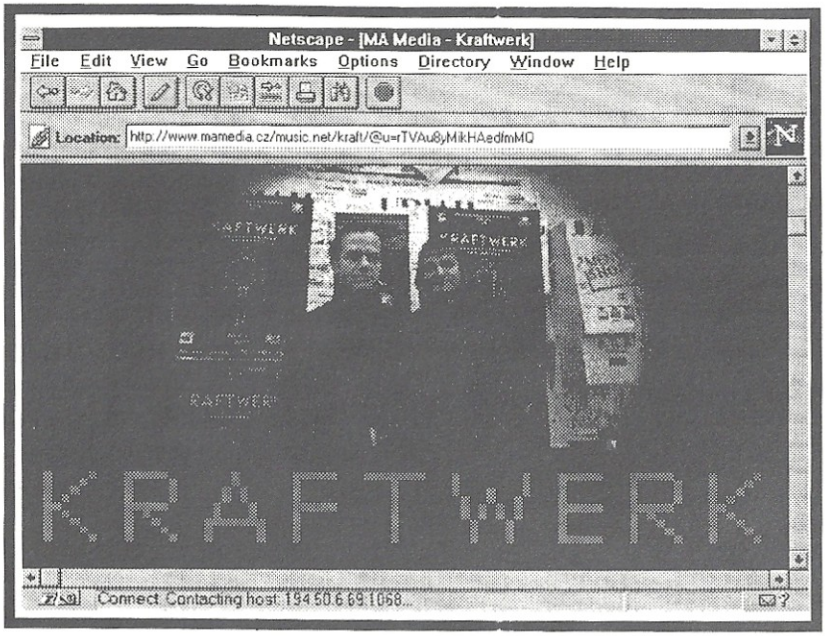

Kraftwerk — *http://www.mamedia.(music.net/kraft/@u=rTVAu8yyMikHAedfmMQ*

A stunning site, featuring some beatiful pictures of Kraftwerkk onstage in 1991 as well as pictures of Ralf Hütter before the concert. Some ofle images are electronically enhanced with additional graphics and all in all some very memorable imageUnfortunately, for English speakers, the text is in Czech. There's also another live piccy, from TEE at... *p://www.mamedia.cz/music.net/kraft/gfx/2.jpg*

The Triad Radio Pages -- *http://pagripco.com:8080/~saxmania/kkraft.html*

Triad was a radio program aired inhicago on the WXFM-FM station between 1969 and 1977. Amongst the 'Euro-rock' acts featured on the Tril airwaves were Kraftwerkk and the above link takes you to their page featuring an interview with Ralf Hter and Florian Schneider, first published in Triad Magazine June 1975. Good stuff, well worth a look.

'Ars Electronica 1993' -- *http://wwaec.at/fest/fest93e/kraft.html*

A site that may well not be onlinelr too long, it basically details Kraftwerk's live appearance from 1993 at the above music festival. As weas some text there are also three live shots from the concert too.

Various pages

EMI-Electrola Home pages -- *http:/)ww.emimusic.de/n/spin/spin.html*

The official site of Kraftwerk's Genan record label, there's not a lot here on Kraftwerk though in theory

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there will be if they should release a new album this year, since the label features pages on all its acts. earlier in the year it listed a Kraftwerk album release for June 1997 -- needless to day, it didn't happen...

Cleopatra Records Home pages *-- http://www.hallucinet.com/cyberden/cleopatra/Cleo_k.html*

Details and cover images of the Kraftwerk releases from the Cleopatra/Hypnotic labels can be found here.

http://www.ticketworld.de/Kraft.htm – Kraftwerk have recently announced two new live dates for later this year. Tickets can be ordered here.

Doepfer Musilelektronik GMBH *-- http://www.doepfer.de/home_e.htm*

Official pages Doepfer Musilelektronik GMBH. Currently, on the 'Events - Fairs - Workshops' page their is some info on the Doepfer connection with Kraftwerk;

'The KRAFTWERK concert at the TRIBAL GATHERING 97 on 24th May 97 in Luton/England was fabulous. Of course some DOEPFER equipment was to be seen on stage. In the German news magazine FOCUS there is a report about the concert (issue 23, pages 184-186). On the stage photo our SCHALTWERK is to be seen on the left page (between Ralf and Ott). The mini keyboards on the single musician fotos at page 186 are our mini-MIDI-keyboards MMK2 (no longer available). By the way the photos of Florian and Ott are exchanged by mistake.'

http://www.xs4all.nl/~bwe/ – Bob Weustink's home pages, a mixture of some graphics and also Tribal Gathering Real Audio samples at present, from Radio 1 originally, at http://www.xs4all.nl/~bwe/luton.htm

http://www.wvinter.net/~epepper/NEWKRAFT.WAV – Check here for a snippet of the new song that Kraftwerk performed live at this years Tribal Gathering event.

http://hem.passagen.se/nanon/kraftwerk/index.html – Andreas Lindkvist - Jukebox. If you want to hear some Kraftwerk check this site out. You'll need a Shockwave plugin though. Certainly quite graphic, nice yellow and black design with large band pic.

http://home1.swipnet.se/~w-10118/kraftwerk – Jens Heidling links page Basically a page of links to other Kraftwerk sites of interest.

http://www.erack.com/select/selecthome.htm – From left-hand frame menu, select 'Headliners' and scroll to select Kraftwerk. A brief synopsis of the Kraftwerk story and some cute little morphing pix of the band from the Man Machine cover. Hardly essential, but worth a look if you like graphical sites.

Kraftwerk-related;

Dingerland *-- http://www.tp1.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/people/gawlista/mucke/dinger.html*

Online March 1997, these semi-official pages detail the work of Klaus Dinger through his work with NEU!, La Dusseldorf, Die Engel des Herrn and his most recent work. The pages are put together by Ralf Gawlista, though it's noted; 'By the way: Gawl stresses that Klaus Dinger's opinions are not necessarily Gawl's opinions!'.

As described from the main home page; 'These are some (mostly official) web pages about Klaus Dinger

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and all his former and recent projects, especially NEU! and La Duesseldorf. All pages (except those two CD-reviews) were created with Klaus Dinger's active participation. All kinds of reactions and/or additional information are, of course, welcome! E-mails (destinated to him) sent to me (gawl, address: see below) will be handed over (printed on paper) to him.'

Yamo Home pages *-- http://www.emimusic.de/r/r025/yamo1.html*

Wolfgang Flür's new project, Yamo, is catered for on the WWW courtesy of these official pages at EMI-Electrola's site. Currently displaying Wolfgang Flür's own notes and comments, as well as graphics, on the Yamo LP 'Time Pie', sound clips of the four tracks from the 'Stereomatic' single as well as cover illustrations for both that and the 'Guiding Ray' single – there's even a QuickTime movie clip too for 'Stereomatic'.

The following pages were online when this article was first prepared some months ago but now appear to be unavailable;

Harald Westphal's homepages *-- http://www.etec.uni-karlsruhe.de/~Harald.Westphal/*
Kraftwerk discography *-- http://www.etec.uni-karlsruhe.de/~Harald.Westphal/discoeng.html*

Maintained by Harald Westphal, these homepages feature articles from past issues of Aktivität in English language form, extracted from the KW mailing list and also an extensive Kraftwerk discography.

OUTRO

"I like them (Kraftwerk) as people very much. Florian in particular. Very dry... When I came over to Europe I got myself a Mercedes to drive around in, 'cause I still wasn't flying at that time, and Florian saw it. He said "What a wonderful car", and I said "Yes, it used to belong to some Iranian prince, and he was assassinated and the car went on the market, and I got it for the tour".

And Florian said, "Ja, car always lasts longer".

With him it all has that edge. His whole cold emotion / warm emotion. I respond to that.

DAVID BOWIE - MELODY MAKER 18/2/78

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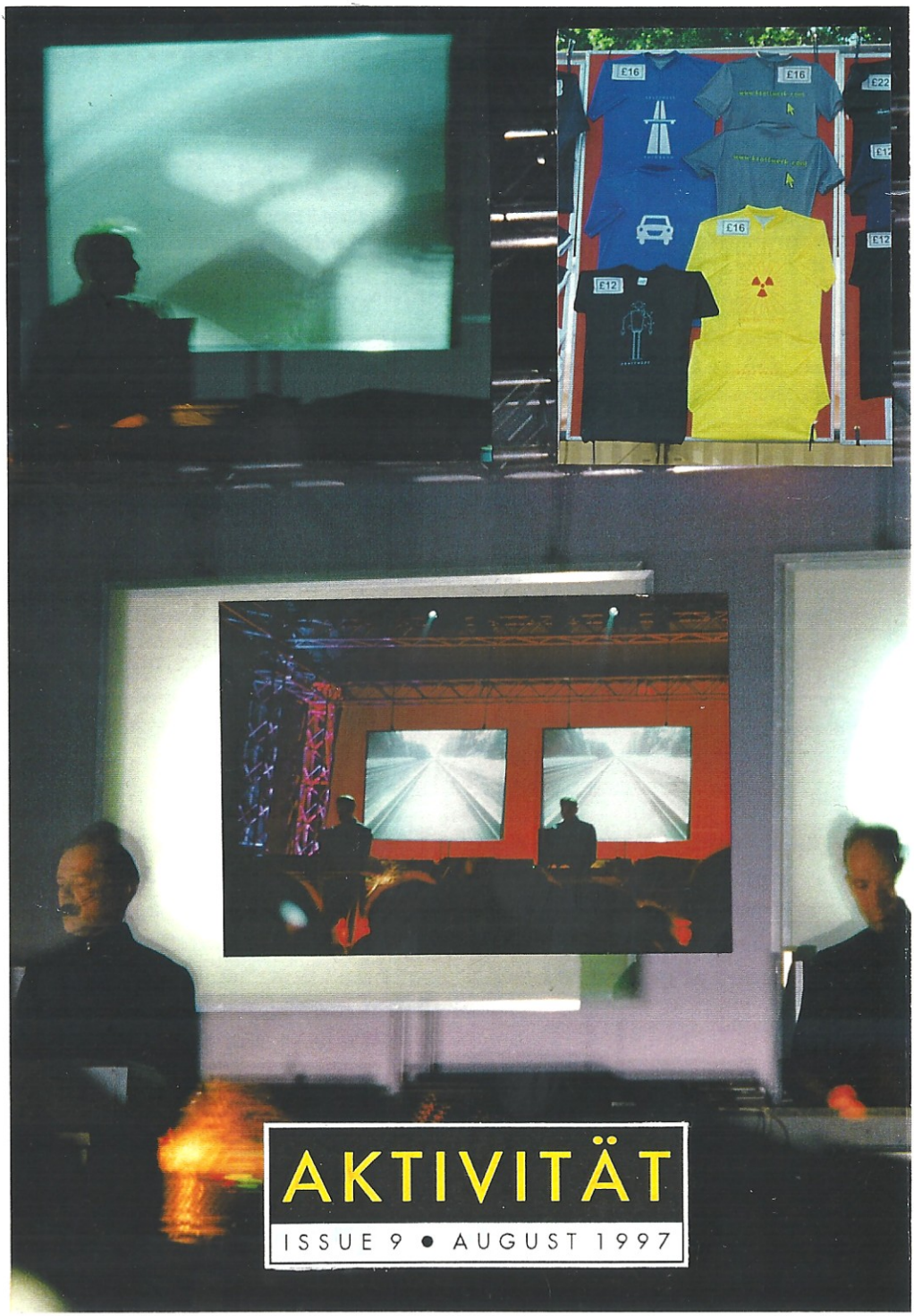

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